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CHRISTIAN UNION IN SOCIAL SERVICE

J.C.CARLILE.

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CHRISTIAN UNION IN SOCIAL SERVICE

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Theology

CHRISTIAN UNION IN SOCIAL SERVICE

BY

JOHN C. CARLILE

AUTHOR OF "LIFE OF DR. MACLAREN," "LABOUR PROBLEMS IN THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL," "THE ROYAL LIFE," ETC., ETC.

WITH FOREWORD

BY THE

RIGHT REV. THE BISHOP OF CROYDON

LONDON

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Foreword

In considering our duty in view of our unhappy divisions, we do not begin with any cut and dried plan of re-union. That would be fatal to the purpose which brings us together, it would create criticism and call forth opposition ; it would only emphasise the things in which we differ and disagree. We are not asking each other to surrender anything as regards principle or helpful practice. There is no invitation to compromise convictions, or to be disloyal to the Church we love. Plans for re-union have resulted in further division.

We ask ourselves and our brothers in the Lord, that we shall seek in the spirit of His Cross to look at the things that divide us, and to understand them ; at least to seek to see each from other's point of view ; to realise that the things in which we are united, are infinitely greater than the things in which we are divided—important as these may be. In vital doctrine there may be small differences between us. Would it not be a great gain to leave the controversies for awhile, in order to unite in prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance, and then in brotherly conference to see the great body of truth which we have in common? It will help us if we can seek the Divine help

for each other. The barriers may not be as great as we suppose.

True union cannot be arranged quickly or easily ; there must first be the teachable spirit and the right disposition. We are not looking for amalgamations, but we are urging that the time has come for joint conference and united effort, wherever possible, on common grounds. This, in the Divine Providence, may lead us to other steps that we may leave in the hands of our Heavenly Father, but our first duty as to conference and common action, is clear.

Christians of all schools of thought are being compelled to recognise the strength of the common enemy that threatens them all, and to face the necessity of joining their forces in one social phalanx for defence and attack. We can no longer stand apart because we do not see eye to eye upon all points.

Mr. Carlile as a Nonconformist, and I as a Churchman, obviously do not agree upon many matters of importance—even upon matters of very great importance—in our religious convictions. But there are many other fundamental truths upon which we are, I believe, in complete agreement ; and for that reason I rejoice when I find an opportunity for co-operation. My experience of the Conferences, at which some of these papers were read and discussed, is of the happiest character, and convinces me that nothing but good should result from the assembly of sincere

and honest men, in order that they may consider, prayerfully, the real reasons of their differences, and the present obligations which rest upon them, to unite in the discharge of those Christian duties, which are common to them, and cannot but largely influence the community in which they live. This is possible, I believe, without any suspicion of sacrifice of principle upon one side or the other.

W. W. Croydon.

Foreword

THIS little book is made up of addresses given to Conferences of Clergy and Ministers of all denominations in the hope of helping the movement for uniting the Churches in the work of Social Reform. They were followed by frank discussion and criticism from various points of view. While the writer agrees with those who find a basis for their faith in personal experience, rather than in authority, accepting the New Testament as the only authoritative text-book of Christianity, distinguishing between things temporal and things eternal, seeking in things essential unity, in things doubtful liberty, and in all things charity—the emphasis is placed upon possible points of agreement. The Churches are not asked to decide what they can give up, but what they can take up.

While the Churches appear to remain the same outwardly, the *status quo* continues, so that though the casual observer might easily suppose that the ancient divisions continue as they were from the beginning, there have been far-reaching changes. Many differences, once regarded as vital, have been outgrown and forgotten. Controversies in which men struggled, as in life and death issues, have been silenced. The point of view

has changed. Churches have acted and reacted upon each other to an extent which makes a reconstruction and restatement of belief upon many points a task of urgent necessity. No doubt it will be objected that union in Social Service, as set forth in this book, is open to any body of citizens, and is not in any sense Christian union. We seek union in Social Service as a step to closer union. It is the only practical way now open—the Churches are divided, and their development is arrested by their divisions. No proposals for union have met with any general or even considerable favour; they have all been unworkable. In the united effort to help our fellows there is created a new feeling which produces a spirit of comradeship and makes the old separations harder to endure. It is from the deepest and best in our Christianity that the motive and strength come for the service the Churches can render to the cause of Social betterment. It is the devotion of the life to the good of the whole that the world recognises as the unanswerable argument for the Faith. Greater than its theology is the evidential value of the Church's Social work. The Roman world was not attracted by the Church's doctrine of the priesthood or the Sacraments; concerning these the people knew nothing, and did not care to inquire. That which turned them to seek the Lord was the disciples' consecration and brotherhood in the common ministry of doing good.

Foreword

Social Service is not the basis of our unity, but its expression. The foundation is the fact of Christ as seen in the idea of the Church in the Gospels, in our common Christianity, and our common Christian experience. It is too late for any one Church to unchurch the others. Each shows qualities that have their origin in fellowship with the Divine Master of all.

The teaching of Jesus is pre-eminently practical. It regenerates the individual character, and then remakes Society. The Spiritual manifests itself through the Social. Religion that does not find expression in well-being and well-doing is not the religion of the gospels. It is a vicious waste of vital force.

The addresses appear practically in their original form. While it is impossible and undesirable to avoid matters of controversy, nothing has been written with a desire to make points against those who do not share the writer's opinions or outlook. It has been his sincere desire to avoid any occasion of giving offence to men for whose personal devotion to their Church and labours for the poor he has the greatest admiration.

The discontent in the Churches with their present condition leads to a critical examination of the value of all ecclesiastical institutions. There is a holy impatience with the " rest and be thankful " attitude assumed by those who hold that comfortable doctrine that things will right themselves, if we wait long enough.

Foreword

The larger vision of the Christianisation of the world has made all who feel the missionary spirit more sensitive to the obligation of presenting a united Church to the heathen mind. The weakening and deadening effects of our unhappy divisions are nowhere more apparent than in the foreign field. This has led to many attempts to secure some practical basis of union. In India and China some interesting experiments are being made in the direction of federating the Churches working in the same area, to prevent overlapping and the migration of undesirable members from one mission station to another, without credentials of character. Something is also being done to determine spheres of influence. The planting of Western sectarianism in the East is beginning to be recognised as a serious hindrance to the evangelising of the educated classes.

The presence in civic and social activities of a great body of non-ecclesiastical Christianity is making itself felt in creating public opinion. There is an unorganised Church outside and antagonistic to all the Churches. It occasionally finds voices demanding a restatement of the Gospel of Christ, in its primitive simplicity, in non-sectarian terms. It places the emphasis upon ethical, rather than upon theological, questions.

The modern ideas of internationalism and world-wide federations for common ends must react upon the parochial mind, compelling larger con-

ceptions and wider sympathies. These forces all give strength to the movement for Christian union. In their competition the Churches have lost their true objective, and are wasting their all too scanty powers. In the hope of helping to unite the Churches in Social Service, and thus hasting the coming of the New Catholicism, these addresses are offered to a larger public.

The Conferences at which the addresses were given were themselves a demonstration of the possibility and advantage of getting men to sit side by side in conference instead of standing on opposite sides in controversy. There has been no attempt at compromise of principle or concealment of points of difference, but the aim throughout has been to discover and emphasise points of agreement. Bishops and Baptists have united in seeking common ground, and they have found it in service for the good of all. Surely this is infinitely better than continually spending strength in discussions over points of dispute in which the truth is not all on either side and final victory is not likely to be with either party.

The Joint Conferences have brought the writer into closer relation with representatives of all the Churches, broadened his outlook and increased his friendships; above all, they have deepened the conviction that the Churches are much nearer each other than they suppose in all that is really vital to their life. The separation of the Churches in their practical work is a national

calamity which saps the strength of their common Christianity. It is maintained by mutual misunderstanding, jealousy and prejudice, rather than differences of principle, but there are signs of a better time in which the Churches will recognise the unity of the Spirit that animates each, and will advance to their work side by side and win greater conquests for the Kingdom of God.

The fact that the Bishop of Croydon has written a Foreword for these papers is not without significance. It does not imply any responsibility for the author's views or criticisms, though it means more than a graceful act of friendship. It is an evidence of the new desire to unite in the interests of peace.

This book is an appeal to all who are heart-sick of the sectarian strifes, and are seeking to find the path to that Christian union for which the one Lord, whom all Christians worship, prayed when the shadow of the Cross was heavy on His heart.

" And now, O Lord God, if in this work I have said anything which is Thine, Thine own will recognise it, and if I have said anything which is mine, do Thou and Thine forgive it."

I

The Condition of the Churches

"There shall be one flock, one Shepherd."

THE MASTER.

"Is Christ divided?"—ST. PAUL.

"Our churches are growing, our missionary operations are extending, our benefactions swelling, and we congratulate ourselves upon our progress; but we have only to continue making the same kind of progress long enough, and our destruction is sure."—DR. JOSIAH STRONG.

"Christianity has been tried for more than eighteen centuries; it is about time to try the religion of Jesus."

DEAN MILMAN.

I

The Condition of the Churches

THE present condition of the Churches is a matter of serious concern. The most superficial observer sees that there is something radically wrong with Zion. The fact is deplored by all religious leaders. It is the common theme of magazine articles and platform addresses. It is not simply that for the moment the preaching man, as in Thomas Carlyle's day, has lost his point. He has often done that before. The Churches seem to have lost their attracting power, and are not sure of themselves. The outstanding facts of the situation are seen in the decline in attendance at public worship, the decrease in the number of communicants and Church members of all denominations, the increasing difficulties in raising money for Church institutions, the steady falling off in the number of Sunday School scholars who unite with the Churches—as Principal Adeney says, "A goodly river of young life pours into the Sunday Schools, with the result that only a tiny rivulet trickles into the Church of Christ as the final issue." Added to these is the waning of old beliefs and the uncertainty concerning doctrines once regarded as vital.

We may question the conclusions of such keen observers of the present conditions as Mr. Masterman, Dr. Figgis, and the Editor of the *Catholic*

Review, but we cannot ignore them. Mr. Masterman says :

"Despite rallies, the process continues. It continues without violence, continuously, steadily, as a kind of impersonal motion of secular change. It is the passing of a whole civilisation away from the faith in which it was founded, and out of which it has been fashioned."[1]

Dr. Figgis bears the same witness. He writes :

"Civilisation in its statesmanship, its economic development, and more and more its social and intellectual life, goes on its way, not indeed unaffected by so great a tradition but largely independent of it. In fine, that secularisation of life which began with the Renaissance and was developed by the Reformation has now gone much further. Religion has become almost entirely departmental, and it is more possible than it once was to treat of the life and manners of the age apart from Christianity and to leave it out of account in estimating the lines of future development."[2]

The Editor of the *Catholic Review*,[3] in a recent article upon "The Failure of Religion in England," writes :

"We are thus face to face with something of tremendous and far-reaching significance, face to face with a fact so overwhelming in its effects and consequences that only the few have even observed its coming, for the disappearance of God from the life of a people is only comparable to the disappearance of the sun from the material heavens. The failure of the religious leaders, or of those who should be the religious leaders, of the people to apprehend this great fact, or if, as in some cases, they are vaguely conscious of it, the utter incapacity to grasp its meaning or propose any adequate remedy, only adds to the pitiful hopelessness of the situation, while it remains one of the most amazing and outstanding features of it.

"The modern world has definitely turned away from Religion. Except perhaps as an interesting archæological

[1] *Condition of England.*

[2] *Civilisation at the Cross Roads.*

[3] *Catholic Review*, April 1913.

pursuit, Christianity no longer exercises its influence on the generality of the people, and such influence as remains to it is declining swiftly enough, even amongst that small section that still in some sort acknowledge its claims."

The external forms of a religion usually survive long after its vital force has failed. The abandonment of outward acts of devotion may be the final evidence of the passing of an old belief. There are many observers who regretfully declare that this is the condition of England, that we are losing faith in Christianity and rapidly assuming a new Paganism, such as the world in its long history has never witnessed. This is infinitely more serious than a mere phase of decline or advance in Church attendance, or disregard for this or that form of Government. It must fill the most optimistic with grave concern.

Contemporary with these signs of the times there is an enormous increase in the nation's wealth, a passion for pleasure which goes far to turn the Sunday into a weekly Bank Holiday, social unrest in all ranks of society, a widening gulf between the classes and the masses, and the lowering of ideals and weakening moral sanctions which create a new set of problems, compelling the attention of all who love their country. There are concurrent forces at work which make thoughtful observers hopeful. No estimate of the condition of religion in England would be accurate that failed to take into account the many streams of sentiment which have flowed from the Churches into wider channels, and are cleansing the life of our times. There is a new pity for the suffering of the submerged which makes social reform a plank in the platform of all political parties.

There is greater concern for the children. Never was England so earnest in seeking to improve the conditions and giving opportunities to the poorest boys and girls. In legislation and education revolutions have been wrought for the sake of the little ones. There is a new type of Christian character that finds its saints not in the cloister but in women like Catherine Booth and Margaret Macdonald, who spend their lives in devotion to the service of others. Religion is no longer an affair of the Churches. It has walked abroad, and found many voices among the people, though they do not speak in the language of theology. There are clear signs that the heart of the modern man still hungers for the knowledge of God. The quest of the divine is destined to continue. It is seen in the spread of Christian Science, Theosophy, and the study of Occultism, as well as in the familiar advertisements of clairvoyants, crystal-gazers, and the rest who exploit the spiritual hunger of the soul. There is a deep conviction in the public mind that obedience to Christ's teaching would heal the wounds in the social body. The dissatisfaction with ecclesiastical institutions is on the ground that they have departed from their true ideal and proper work. The sky is dark, but not all dark.

Eucken rightly says :

> " He is but a superficial observer of the times who can think that the movement of life to-day is altogether against religion, and that only the denial of religion has the spirit of the age in it."

Doubtless there are many causes contributing to the weakening of the Churches which are entirely beyond their control. Social and

economic changes have introduced new elements which increase the pressure upon the individual and drain the energies of body and mind to an extent hardly realised by those who are outside the rush of modern commercial and professional pursuits. The week-end habit and the hunger for distraction, which have largely told against the calm of public worship, are symptoms of a deep-rooted disease. The uncertainty in religious teaching is a passing phase of theological speculation and readjustment to larger knowledge. More serious is the widespread revival of ancient pagan culture. There are other causes in the Churches themselves, which must be faced courageously before there can be any great improvement in their condition. Among the most important of these, and perhaps more deadly than the rest in its influence, is the divided condition of the Churches with its subtle undermining of character and paralysis of effort.

All true revivals of spirituality begin with a fresh vision of God. The supreme need of our time is a vision of the Divine unity. While the Churches devoutly seek a revival of spiritual power they are forced to examine their own condition and to see how far they are contributing to the evils which they deplore. Hasty generalisations will not help. There must be patient and careful investigation of the present conditions and their causes. The Churches are not the best judges of their own state. They are in the thick of the fight and the dust of conflict may obscure their vision. They are not all in the same position, or working under similar conditions. Where there are great congregations and the signs of

success, there may be the opinion that the adaptation of their methods and the preaching of their views would secure the same results elsewhere. There is no one remedy for the present conditions, but there is one plain cause of weakness, for which the Churches themselves are responsible and which they have the power to remove as soon as they are prepared to return to the teaching of their Divine Leader.

The old sectarian divisions once regarded with complacency, if not with pride, are now felt to be a weakness, if not a disgrace. Their incongruity with the Divine ideal is obvious. However justifiable the causes that led to separation may have been, the results in our time cannot be viewed with satisfaction. There may be still some good men who think that the present competition among the Churches is divinely inspired and will ultimately further the advance of the Kingdom of God, but surely their view is not the result of sound exegesis nor of a survey of all the facts. It is rather the substitution of the axiom of commercialism that competition is the life of business, for the Christian teaching that disciples of Christ are all members of one body, the health of each dependent upon the harmonious working and growth of all.

Religous forces in England when united by a great movement are an enormous power, and well nigh irresistible for good, but in their normal condition of separation they are almost a negligible quantity. The Churches are failing where the Church could easily succeed. The urgent question is, how can the Church retain, or regain her rightful place in the life of the nation ?

The Condition of the Churches

The forces of evil are an organised army. The Churches are disjointed units, wasting strength which should go to the upbuilding of the moral and spiritual life of the people. The divisions of the Churches have assumed a new importance in the changed conditions of our time. The old sectarianism is dead or dying. The present divided state of the Churches is so disastrous that one is asking whether there is any justification for its continuance. In a typical provincial town with a population of about 30,000 the Churches are represented by the Church of England, with its characteristic varieties—High Church, Low Church and Broad Church—several types of Methodism, two kinds of Baptists, Strict and Particular, and three Congregational Churches. There are five varieties of Brethrenism, a number of Independent missions, the Pentecostal League and the Salvation Army. These all claim to possess the truth of God and work upon independent and separate lines with regard to the others.

In the villages Church looks down upon Dissent, and Dissent burns white hot with jealousy and indignation. They never see things from each other's point of view. The struggles of the poor curates and pastors are pathetic and sometimes tragic. In addition to the cure of souls, there is the daily fight to keep the wolf of poverty from the door. It is increasingly difficult to withstand the deadening influences of an age given up to the pursuit of pleasure and the glorification of money. How can ministers keep their spiritual vision clear and their ears open to the voice of the Spirit while the question of finding the means to provide for their wives and children becomes more urgent

every year, and the clamant demands for money to pay their way are growing louder ? Ministers, like other men, must somehow meet the expenses of of living. Their bills must be honourably paid. What must be the humiliation of a minister—a graduate of a first-class college—whose salary is sixteen shillings a week, or five shillings below the weekly wage of a dustman ? Can men retain their self-respect while they are compelled to beg for their own stipends ? Choice characters, saints of God, are suffering in silence and doing noble work, but who could be surprised if ordinary men under such pressure became mere time-servers, unconsciously losing their early ideals and the fragrance of their youthful piety ; and sinking to the hopeless condition of pulpit parasites ?

What are the effects of our divisions upon the character of the Church members ? Those who are brothers in theory are in practice keen competitors.

> "It is not love, but a discordant war
> Whose unlike parts amongst themselves do jar."

Happily there have been many causes contributing to the weakening of sectarianism and the modification of its baneful results, but there are still consequences which no lover of the Church can view without sorrow and humiliation. Good people still think it justifiable to extract a solemn pledge from young persons that they will never under any circumstances attend religious service in the place of worship where their neighbours, and in some cases their parents, say their prayers. The rival sects foster spiritual pride, envy and

bigotry. Instead of the love that thinketh no evil, there is the spirit of suspicion.

Our divisions are most pernicious in their effects upon the people outside the Churches. They give some justification to the common attitude of neutrality. The average man is not disposed to investigate the rival claims. He finds shelter in the excuse that he does not know which is the true Church and therefore is content to stand aloof from all. The Churches hide the Church. The divisions create confusion as to the character of Christian teaching. Our representatives say Yea and Nay to the same questions. Complexity is substituted for simplicity. The leaders of the Churches are regarded as special pleaders for their particular denominations, rather than the ambassadors of the truth. If half-a-dozen foremost scientists agreed upon the interpretation of any fact in nature, the public would accept their view, but the agreement of theologians upon fundamental facts of the Christian faith makes no such impression. Through division confidence has been lost in the testimony of the Churches.

In the history of the nations, peoples succumb when their work for the world is done. In nature, all forms die off as their utility passes away. In industry, the inefficient instrument and machine find their way to the scrap-heap, and more modern inventions take their place. Why, asks the intelligent observer, should the representatives of dead controversies remain exceptions as survivals of the unfit, long after their distinctive purpose has been accomplished? It would not be easy for the denominations to justify their isolation. It

seems that when a truth was overlooked or denied, a separate body became necessary to keep it from oblivion, but when the truth won its way to general acceptance or ceased to have moral value for the age, the justification of the existence of the separate body that championed it ceased. The Churches themselves no longer dwell upon their particular "isms"; they preach a common Christianity. Occasionally a voice from the very distant past resounds with the old message of strife, but instead of response, there is only a confused wonder of what it is all about and what it has to do with us. It is generally agreed that sectarian controversy is exiled from polite conversation. It makes for neither sweet reasonableness in the individual, nor the good of the community.

As a practical force the old Denominationalism is absolutely dead. Institutions are galvanised and brave attempts made to keep up artificial respiration, but in place of a soul there is only a sepulchre that has become a shrine. The outsiders know this well enough, and never give a thought to the old-time distinctions, now crystallised in vested interests, which are the barriers to unity. This is so generally admitted that the National Free Church Congress heard with approval the Secretary of the Baptist Union make the startling statement that :

" The plain fact is that this vast tree of Denominationalism is rapidly becoming hollow ; it is propped up by the iron bands of trust-deeds and funds, and by that conservatism which is so beautiful and touching when it confines itself to 'ivy-mantled towers ' and ' moping owls.' We are coming to see that, in the tremendous struggle that is upon us, the real issue is to retain the Cross, and the Word, and the personal God Himself. One day, in a

general storm, the hollow tree will come down with a crash."

The waste of energy and money in overlapping is disheartening. Theoretically, it is condemned by all the Churches, but it continues year after year. It makes new enterprise extremely difficult, and is a ready argument with those who desire a reason for withholding contributions. Standing apart, the Churches are almost powerless in their fight with social evil. There is no desire to take from them the glory they have earned in contributing to progress. Their self-sacrifices and heroisms are the glory of our common inheritance. To the little Bethels and Zions and the village Churches, England owes the best elements in her history. Ministers have been among the pioneers of all good causes, but the need of to-day is collective effort in the direction of national righteousness, and that effort the Churches are prevented from making by their old individualism. Men who would have found their vocation in the ministry give themselves to the Labour Movement and Social Reform, recognising the greater opportunity. This raises the question of the future leadership of the Churches which is causing increasing anxiety to all bodies in England and America.[1] Men of small outlook and narrow sympathies, poorly equipped and struggling with personal poverty, however earnest they may be, cannot supply the necessary leadership for the religious and moral forces which alone are equal to the salvation of the nations. Dr. G. A. Gordon rightly said : " If our religion is to be great and do great things, it must be in the care of great souls

[1] *Future Leadership of the Church.* Dr. Mott.

—souls great in illumination and in intense and pure desire." We need Christlike men of large ideals and big hearts, trained and disciplined, with undaunted courage and fortitude, who will respond to the call of the Divine Voice, not for the sake of the position or the pay that it brings, but for the love of Christ and His people, recognising that the Christian ministry provides greater scope for the service of humanity than any other vocation can offer.

It is not possible to make that appeal with the full knowledge of the conditions under which the minister of a small Church now labours. The appeal to the imagination which a united Church could make is lost. The divisions spell weakness, inefficiency and disaster, if not extinction.

Great movements have sprung up outside the Churches. They have much of the Christian spirit and have appropriated Christian teaching. Where they are not hostile to the Church, they are indifferent. These movements are not the outcome of ignorance, but of an intelligent and definite disbelief in ecclesiastical methods and aims. They are voiced by many who were formerly inside the Churches and are quite familiar with their work. They represent a passion for civic righteousness worthy of all admiration. The men who lead them have come to the conclusion that the Churches are often by the force of circumstances driven to the position of apologists for vested interests in social unrighteousness rather than the promoters of any real justice and brotherhood. These men hold the ethic of Christianity without its evangel. They form a new type and present a new problem.

They are not irreligious, their opposition is not to Christ but to the Churches.

We have grown familiar with the cry of crisis which the sensational Press sends out two or three days a week, yet all the indications seem to point to a fateful hour in Christian history. Dr. Mott has written a book upon "The Decisive Hour in Christian Missions," and the Edinburgh Conference agreed that such an hour has come. It is not alone for missions, but for Churches. We are in the whirl, and perhaps nearly at the end, of one of those mighty movements which pass over the world almost unnoticed, until their results are seen. The old order is rapidly giving place to the new. We are living in a new England, revising our beliefs and recasting our ideals. It is an hour big with destiny, and upon the Churches solemn responsibility rests. The next few years may decide the character of our people for centuries to come. The invincible optimists will smile if they chance to read these lines; they are satisfied that all is right with the world, though each year the returns of the Churches put into figures our increase in wealth and our decrease in living members, until we are heart-sick of the prophecy of smooth things. When the man of God sees a valley of dry bones, he does not describe it as a beautiful garden of flowers. The Spirit of God has not left his people, and the future cannot be rightly interpreted by those whose hearts are afraid, but we dare not shut our eyes to the grim facts. We must see them in truth before the opportunity is past. The shame of them must burn into our conscience. The crisis is not confined to any one section of the Church. All

Christian communities are showing more or less clearly their impotence to deal with the new conditions. How can the tide be turned? Is it possible to trace the deplorable results to our unhappy divisions? Are we losing the battle because our ranks are divided? In other words, have the Churches paralysed the Church?

The Churches are undergoing changes more profound than any that have taken place since the sixteenth century. Already in the great centres of population they are fighting for their existence. Where there is not an outstanding personality in the pulpit the condition is desperate. The organisations are kept going or just saved from extinction by a few brave souls whose sacrifices are magnificent, but the whole force of the new conditions are against them. They become more and more impoverished in money and in men. In the great crusades for righteousness they hardly count. In hundreds of places of worship the congregations have dwindled to mere skeletons, they are dispirited and defeated. In the poorest districts, where they are sorely needed, they are almost powerless. No denomination has yet faced the facts.

There is a deeper desire than ever for some practical union among those who believe in God; many causes have contributed to strengthen the sympathies and widen the outlook of all who bear the Christian name. The dying down of the old doctrinal bitterness, the defeat of the narrow denominationalism, the consciousness that no branch of the one Church can undertake all that demands doing, and the revolt from the policy of unchurching good men who are doing the Lord's

work, though called by other names, are all preparing the way for the linking up in holy comradeship of those who have prayed and toiled apart. There is now the sentiment that should find its manifestation in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

More than twenty years ago, Dr. Martineau wrote in sorrow what many have felt and would make their own :

> " I cannot withdraw a protest, however hopeless it may seem, against allowing the Christian Church to remain a mere cluster of rival orthodoxies, disowning and repelling each other, while, in the inmost heart of all, secret affections live and pray, with eye upturned to the same infinite Perfection, and tears let fall for the same universal sorrows."

The time for protest has passed. The political movements of the day may emphasise the things that divide and embitter, but all Christian communities are riper for union in the extension of the Kingdom of God than the casual and superficial observer dreams.

If the Churches are to survive they must become more Christian, and heal their own unhappy divisions. In their present condition they are a melancholy object lesson of the folly of family strife. The question of the practical reunion of the Churches is not a mere matter of academic interest; it is terribly urgent in view of increasing difficulties and added burdens, which neither can continue to meet and bear without help from the others.

In the early ages of the solar system, much was chaotic and disorderly. Conflicting tendencies, exceptions and mists were features of that early universe. Had there then existed an astronomer

with prophetic insight to discern the secret movements of that seemingly confused and chaotic world, he would have said that all was the action of one universal law, bringing cosmos out of chaos. May it not be in the spiritual world that the deepest law of its total movement is spiritual gravitation, and that order and harmony will come, through obedience to the Divine Spirit whose dynamic is love? Our isolation and division in view of the clamant needs of the time are the mark and the measure of our disobedience to the Holy Spirit, whose mission is to guide the humble into all Truth.

II

The Church in the Gospels

I believe in the holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints."

"The Church is indeed finally the realisation of the brotherhood of men, and it is the abiding pledge of that truth in the face of the present separations and rivalries of nations."—BISHOP WESTCOTT.

"The Church means the people of God, the Society which has Christ for its head and is indwelt by His Spirit and equipped by the Spirit's gifts, whether it be the Church at large or its local representation."—BISHOP GORE.

II

The Church in the Gospels

ALL the Churches profess Scriptural authority for their separate existence, and claim to find their origin and justification in the teaching of the Lord Jesus. Roman Catholics, Brethren and teachers of all the "isms" are very sure that their particular Church is *the* Church which is revealed in the New Testament. They have quoted proof texts so often that it seems to surprise them that there should be any difference of opinion as to their conclusions. Some zealous advocates go so far as to assign these differences to spiritual or moral defects. The teaching of the Lord was no private doctrine, designed for narrow circles of the initiated, nor was it scholastic or scientific doctrine, designed for the scholarly and the cultured. It was a message of universally intelligible import, designed for all classes of people, rich and poor, young and old, if they would but hearken and receive it.

Turning to the Gospels to enquire which Church the Lord founded, one is met by the previous question, Did He found any Church at all? The enquiry is seriously raised, whether in the teaching of the Son of God, who was also the Son of Man, there is any evidence that He intended to create an organisation answering to the modern idea of a

Church. He wrought for individuals, associating others with Himself, not as a sect, but as separate persons. His ministry was not to, or through, a corporate body, but through individuals. His emphasis was individual. " What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? "

The word Church does not occur in three of the Gospels. It is only twice recorded by Matthew. Evidently the term was not one of the Lord's favourite and familiar forms of expression. Some critics deny that Jesus used the word at all. They dismiss one passage as textually doubtful, and both as belonging to that element in Matthew which is latest, and has least claim to authenticity. If, however, we accept both passages as genuine parts of the record, it is evident that the modern usage of the term " Church " has little in common with the ἐκκλησία in the Gospel. The earlier translations of the English Bible render the word " congregation." It was not till 1611 that the present form was generally adopted. In the Bishop's Bible, for example, MATT. xvi. 18 is rendered, " Upon this rock I build my congregation." Dr. Hort says:

> " The English term ' Church,' now the most familiar representative of ecclesia to most of us, carries with it associations derived from the institution and doctrines of later times, and this cannot at present, without a constant mental effort, be made to convey the full and exact force that originally belonged to ecclesia."

In both passages in Matthew, the term Fellowship, in the sense of Brotherhood, would be nearer the original meaning of the word. The ecclesia was equivalent to God's folk, those whom Jesus

called out of the old life in the world to follow the new way of Fellowship which He revealed.

The Lord began His ministry as a preacher of the Kingdom of God. He took the idea of the Kingdom as He found it in the teaching of John the Baptist. He eliminated in the progress of His ministry all that was local and materialistic. The mission which He came to accomplish was given Him by the Father who bore witness to Him. It was nothing less than the establishment of the Kingdom of God. At the commencement of His preaching, He announced its approach. In the little synagogue at Nazareth, He proclaimed the fulfilment of the glowing promises of Isaiah. The Kingdom had come. Men were everywhere to repent and believe the Gospel, for the time was fulfilled. They were not to seek a glimpse of a distant glory. It was at hand. This was ever His one objective, the burden of His message. It was the theme of His prayers, and the cause of His crucifixion.

Social reformers have seen in the Kingdom of God a new economic order, an ideal state of society, in which liberty, equality and fraternity would be realised. With good reason they have claimed the Lord as the preacher of social righteousness. Some have identified the Kingdom with a particular form of Socialism.

"Thus," says an able writer, "We see the true relation of Socialism to Christianity. It is no mere kindly sentiment or occasional benevolence, springing out of Christian teaching and Christian hope. It is part and parcel of Christ's method of regenerating the world. We may go beyond affirming that there is Socialism in Christianity. In truth, Christianity is Socialism. Christ has established the Kingdom of Heaven on earth."[1]

[1] *The Socialism of Christianity*, p. 50.

On the other hand, many theologians see in the Kingdom of God a conception of future blessedness in the life beyond the tomb. They transfer its high privileges and glories to the spiritual state, while others argue that the Kingdom of the Messiah is the actual consummation of the prophetic idea of the rule of God, and that the term, "Kingdom of God," and all kindred expressions never signify anything else than the Kingdom of the Messiah, even in those passages where they appear to denote the Church, the moral Kingdom of the Christian religion, and such like, or to express some modern abstraction of the concrete conception which is one given in the history.[1]

Each conception has some justification. The Kingdom has no geographical limitations. It is not restricted to any one period of time. It is everlasting. It is here and now and will be in the future in every place where men obey the royal rule of God. Augustine and the Fathers generally have identified the Kingdom with the Church, and further restrict it to their particular form of Church organisation. The Reformation teaching too often followed the same lines, and regarded the Church and the Kingdom as expressing one conception. The Kingdom of God, though not formally defined in words by the Lord Jesus, is clearly set forth in precept and parable. It is close at hand, and the man who knows the supreme command is near to it. It is among us, even in us. The idea of the Kingdom runs through the Old Testament, becoming clearer and more spiritual and inward as Israel is prepared to receive its truth.

Jesus did not destroy the historical conception

[1] Meyer, Schmoller and J. Weiss, hold this view.

of the Kingdom in the minds of His countrymen. He liberated it from its traditional narrowness and Rabbinical misconception. Jesus lived and spake within the circle of eschatological ideas, which Judaism had developed more than two hundred years before, but He controlled them by giving them a new content and forcing them into a new direction. In His teaching, the Kingdom is the restoration of the lost harmony of man with God. It is oneness of the Human with the Divine. It will grow as the grain of mustard seed, for God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. It will come in all its fulness when Christ is recognised as in all, over all, blessed for ever. The ancient prayer, "Thy Kingdom come" will have its answer in redeemed humanity. The laws of the Kingdom are the Sermon on the Mount. Its ideal is the will of God done on earth as it is done by higher intelligences in heaven. If the Kingdom of God means the royal rule of God, it is necessarily much more than all the Churches. What the Kingdom of God is, is nowhere expressly stated. The idea is regarded as one quite familiar to the people. In fact, no one in Israel, which was from the first to be a Kingdom whose supreme Lord and King was Jehovah, could thereby understand anything else than a Kingdom in which the will of God is perfectly fulfilled upon earth, as by the angels in heaven. It is the new order in which the relation of men to God is that of sons, and to each other that of brothers.

The Lord established the Kingdom, the watchwords of which are "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," by instituting a Fellowship. It was inaugurated by the call to the two

fishermen of Galilee, who heard the Master's word " Follow Me," and straightway obeyed His invitation. " Follow Me " contains all the commandments. If it were understood, it is all that is necessary to say. The Fellowship begins in personal obedience. From first to last it is that. The Fellowship was increased to twelve representative men, the torch-bearers in the darkness, the Apostles, who were its subjects and its heralds. It was further widened until it became a Kingdom without frontiers. At the first, Jesus called men to the Way in which they found the Truth, enabling them to live the Life. The call is based upon the authority He possesses. He demands full obedience. His claim is above that of father or mother. Those who would have life and fellowship are to lose their life in the world that they may find their higher self-realisation. The Kingdom of God is within them. Obedience to Christ is the key-note to assurance. Those who do the will of the Father know the truth of the teaching. The disciples discovered the open secret of that spiritual power which antedates all religious experience, without which religion itself is nothing more than an organised pretence. They found that in obeying the law they appropriated the power. Christ was for them a revelation of the law of truth and life. He was the will of God in the flesh. As they followed Him they came into a new consciousness of certainty, which made sacrifice easy. Their faith was the surest knowledge. It found its verification in obedience. There is a law of mutual service, and neither is at liberty to exercise lordship over the other. They are not to be as the Gentiles,

who seek to claim the right to service. They are to be a new type of man, whose glory is the capacity to render service. They are the sons of the one Father in Heaven. Their service is not to be servile as that of slaves, but joyous and free as that of friends and brothers.

The Fellowship is contrasted with life in the world. Brothers live in the spirit and not in the flesh. Christ is the source of their new life and also its standard and example. They are bound together by common love to Him. Jesus said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Their love to each other is measured by the love of their Lord for them. "A new commandment," He says, "I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." In contrast with the Fellowship are those who love the world and its darkness. The test question for each disciple is the word of the Master, "Lovest thou Me?" Love is the type, the tie and the test of the Brotherhood. "By this," says Jesus, "shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

The unity of the Fellowship is first inward and spiritual. It makes the well-being of each the care of all. It implies, not only mutual service, but also self-surrender. As Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, taking the place of the slave, so ought each to possess the spirit manifested in the act. Duty is transfigured by love. When any question arises as to how the believer is to act, he is to go back to first principles. In the example of the Lord, there are two great character-

istics which stand out in all His ministry—His unfailing love and His infinite sacrifice. Life's values are in the example of the Lord. The Cross was the eternal symbol of the Fellowship. It involved sacrifice for others. He who would be the Christ's disciple, must not only follow. He must also take up his cross. This is the basic principle. Without it, there may be doctrines and sacraments, but there cannot be Christ's Fellowship of souls.

The supreme test is the life dominated by love. It is a question of following the Christ, in union with Himself. The Fellowship is not a federation of organisations, but a new life expressed in communion with God and love of one's neighbour. Its authentic sign is the presence of the Master, who promised that through all the ages He would be wherever two or three were gathered in His name. It is open to the poor in spirit, those who hunger for righteousness may therein find food. Entrance is wholly dependent upon the possession of the new life which is the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Fellowship is to represent Christ to the present age. The last command commissioned them to declare the good news, to teach the truths He taught, to live the life they had seen Him live, and to do this in the consciousness of His real presence. It requires all Christians to represent Christ to the world; each Church is a single instrument, not the whole orchestra. All nature unites in creating the impression of beauty upon the mind. Clouds and hills add their fragment to the whole conception, just as all reflecting substances combine to send forth the radiance of the sun. The vast expanse

of water mirrors the great orb, and the broken bits of glass flash forth his rays; so each in the Fellowship represents something of the Divine in living the Christ life, and the total reflection portrays Christ to the world.

In considering the meaning of the term "Church" in the two passages in Matthew to which reference has been made, the word must be interpreted in the light of the whole teaching of the Lord. We cannot admit any construction placed upon it which introduces a foreign element contradicting the basis of the Fellowship which our Lord inaugurated. In MATT. xviii. 17, there is the Divinely-appointed method for dealing with the trespass or fault that one member of the Fellowship may commit against another. If personal entreaty fails to effect a reconciliation, the kindly intervention of two or three others may be sought. Should this not succeed, there is the final appeal to the whole Fellowship, in whom there is authority to pronounce judgment upon the unrepentant offender. The disciples who were called out from the world to manifest the love of Christ for others are thus protected by a beautiful rule for the settlement of questions of personal offences. It is not necessary to read any right of excommunication into the passage.

The other text, MATT. xvi. 18, has been the centre round which many fierce controversies have waged. Upon it the Roman Catholic Church builds its claim to supremacy, declaring that in it the Lord gave to Peter, the man, the right to rule in His Church, and to pass on His authority to successors through all the centuries. The passage is interpreted by some to mean that

not Peter the individual, but the confession of faith in Christ which he made, was to be the foundation of the Church. This is the view held by those who insist upon a credal basis of the Church. There are others who hold that the Church was built on a human character acknowledging the Divine Sonship of the Lord. This interpretation would be in harmony with all the teaching of the Gospels concerning the Fellowship. It should be noted that the passage is highly figurative, and must be interpreted with some allowance for the mode of expression. Jesus gave to Peter authority to declare admission to the Fellowship upon the terms which He Himself had made known. This is practically what the disciples did in the first preaching of the Gospel. Our Lord also declared that the power to loose and to bind as exercised by the representative of the Brotherhood should be ratified in Heaven, and that the Fellowship would be victorious, though assailed by all the forces of evil represented by the gates of hell.

The modern search for the essence of Christianity leads us back to the Gospels. There we have found a Fellowship of souls with Christ as the author and leader. The constitution of the Fellowship is everywhere the same, and has always been the same from the beginning. The Fellowship may be more or less Christ-like, but the difference is only between more and less. There is never a difference in kind; it is in degree. Its distinctive elements and their relations are always the same. There is one religion in the Gospels, one faith, one Fellowship. On the other hand, the form of manifestation changes and continues

to change. It is not the same in one land as in another. It is different in one time from that which it is in another, different under different circumstances, but the Fellowship never varies in kind. The imagination can conceive a representation of Christianity more in accord with the sublime conceptions of Jesus Christ, and more nearly producing the idea of Fellowship than that embodied in the Churches. In the near future, there must be large readjustments of ecclesiastical values. The signs are not wanting that indicate the larger vision of unity. We have lost the conception of Christ's Fellowship of souls; its restoration may be the salvation of religion in our time. There is greater need for the Fellowship than ever before. The charm of the idea lingers in the imagination, and haunts the thinking of men in all the Churches, and is destined to absorb the best in each and fulfil the ideal of all.

For the strengthening of the Brotherhood which Jesus instituted, or to which He gave His authority, two simple rites were established. They have been so elaborated in form that one might fail to recognise them in their modern representations. The Lord adopted the ceremony of baptism as the sign of initiation into the Fellowship. He was Himself baptised by John. The disciples baptised upon His authority, and in the great commission baptism became the symbol of submission to the new life. It marked the reversion from the ritual of the temple and the synagogue to the old prophetic religion that asked, "What doth Jehovah require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" It was an attempt to return to the simplicity and

natural expression of religion. The candidate for baptism expressed repentance, and received the remission of sins. The ceremony did not cleanse from sin; the cleansing was in the answer of a good conscience toward God. Redemption came not through corruptible things, but was the gift of God. Baptism was the sign of the disciples' death to the old life. They were buried with Christ in baptism, that they might rise in the power of His resurrection to serve Him in newness of the spirit. Baptism was followed by the gift of the Holy Ghost. This was so general that where the evidence of the gift was not shown in experience, baptism was declared to be invalid. It is placed at the beginning of the spiritual life. It is a declaration of sonship, a confession of faith. The most remarkable allusion to the subject in our Lord's speech occurs in the conversation with Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." This may have had special reference to the baptism of John. Nicodemus was probably among the number of Pharisees and lawyers who rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and refused John's baptism. The Lord shows the absolute necessity of regeneration as the condition of entering into the Kingdom, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Baptism is the outward sign, the symbol through which the disciple passes into Fellowship. It is not surprising that the sign and the thing signified should be united as parts of the whole in our Lord's speech, and afterwards we should find instances of the sign

being spoken of as the thing itself, so closely were the two identified in the teaching of Christ.

The Last Supper was instituted by our Lord at the close of the Jewish Passover. When the evening was come He sat down with the twelve. It was the closing meal of the day, and as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it in the form of giving thanks, and brake it and gave to the disciples, saying, "Take, eat, this is My body," and He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave to them saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom." The thoughts of the disciples would naturally be carried back to the Passover commemoration, which told of the deliverance of the ancient people from Egypt, and carried the mind away to that terrible story of the night in which the destroying angel slew the first-born in every house in Egypt which was not marked by the blood of the Passover Lamb. Paul quotes the words of the Master, which he received of the Lord, and adds, "This do in remembrance of Me." The key to the meaning of the ceremony is in the Apostle's words: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." It was in truth a Communion, a pledge of loyalty to the Christ, and to each other, a partaking together of the memorial of the sacrifice of Christ and the glory that was to follow, wherein the Fellowship confessed and declared that though many, they were but one body, by virtue of the common life

received through Christ the Head of the body. He was the Vine, they were its branches, made one by the life that flowed through all. It was a Eucharist, a thanksgiving, a rejoicing over the glad tidings of the One who gave His life a ransom for many, a symbolical representation of the body that was broken and of the blood that was shed for the remission of sins, wherein the disciples reminded themselves of the debt they owed, and the obligation they had taken up. The word Communion may be rendered by the term Fellowship. The thought is the same—it is the oneness of all who have been brought into living relationship with Jesus Christ, and have been made to drink of the one Spirit.

The Supper hardly bore the appearance of a religious ceremony. To the uninstructed it might have appeared part of the ordinary meal of the day. It was immediately preceded by the Feast of Charity, at which the members of the Fellowship, without regard to distinctions of social position, met and sat down to the table of the Lord. It was their acknowledgment of equality in the presence of the Master. They partook of the feast in its simplicity, and immediately after, perhaps as a concluding part of it, the bread and wine were placed upon the table. The bread was broken and distributed, with the wine, among all the guests, after Christ's own example and appointment. The very words of thanksgiving which the Apostle quotes were repeated by the one who presided at the table—in all probability he would be an Apostle or Elder ; hence the name, the Lord's Supper, or the simpler description, the Breaking of Bread, by which this

ceremony became known. Herein the disciples were so united as to be together and to have all things common, as the members of one family. The simplicity of the service is clearly shown in the fact that it was possible to regard it as an actual part of an ordinary meal.

The service is a witness to the reality of the Brotherhood. The disciples come together upon an equality of spiritual privilege. They are guest-friends one of another, members of the same household of faith, blood relations of Jesus Christ. It is a real communion of saints; rich and poor, ignorant and cultured, are as one. There is no distinction of sex, class, or race. Identity with Christ is the central thought upon which everything else depends. "Whosoever eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him." This is the daring figure in which the secret of fellowship is set forth. The service is more than a commemoration. It is a communion, a means of grace, a consecration. It is a feast of hope, for it is only till He come that the remembrance will be needed.

Whatever else there may be in the meaning of baptism and communion, they are primarily set forth as bonds of union, not barriers of division. There is one baptism, one communion, as there is one Fellowship. Jesus, while Himself submitting to the ceremonial observances of His nation, did not regard them as obligations which were to continue in the same form from age to age. He did not bind them upon the Fellowship, but claimed the right to change their meaning and to

abrogate them. His relation to the Jewish law is set forth in the principle that He came not to destroy but to fulfil. But this fulfilment was of a nature which meant in part destruction. His aim was to judge the ceremonial by reference to its spiritual principle and the needs of men, to get behind the changing forms to the abiding meaning, to give the freest and simplest expression to the inner life of the spirit.

The Fellowship in the teaching of the Lord is a visible communion of those who are in vital union with Himself. There is no suggestion of rivalry, except in love and good works. Those who belong to Christ belong to each other. Love to God produces love toward all good men. Strife in the Fellowship is a foreign element plainly declared to be the work of the evil one, who is ever watchful to sow the seeds of anger, envy, self-love, and a whole brood of ills in faithless hearts. The safeguard is in more intimate communion with the Lord. There is but one Fellowship, distributed in many places until it is in every part of the earth. They come from the East and the West, the North and the South, to enter into the Kingdom of God. The character of the Fellowship is essentially the same, Christ-likeness. The idea set before the disciples is only attainable through unity. Each one is to possess the mind that was in Christ, and the judgment of the whole body is to be controlled by Christ. This is the Church idea in the Gospels. Jesus puts the whole emphasis on life and character. By their fruits His followers are to be known and judged. Those who are His own will bear the family likeness. He will dwell in their hearts and live in their

lives. A return to the conception of the Fellowship as set forth in the New Testament might be the re-interpretation of the Christ to the twentieth century, which would bring the apostolic zeal into the decadent Church organisations, and reclothe the religion of Christ with its natural simplicity and the passionate love of its early years. Wherever men are living the Christ life, in dependence upon the power of God, there the Fellowship is represented and the Church of Christ has its home.

So far the reader, whatever his ecclesiastical allegiance, would probably be in agreement, but would go further. He might claim that the Lord called into existence the germ which became the Divine Society, and took concrete form in the Apostolic or sub-Apostolic age with its more or less clearly defined offices and rites. He might accept the view set forth by Dr. Hatch, that the congregational system of early Christianity passed into the diocesan system of mediæval and modern times. Following the historic method, it might be urged that the justification of the existence of differences is to be found in the nature of Christianity itself. It was designed to be at once universal and permanent, to embrace all races of mankind, and to meet the needs of successive ages. The presumption is that, this being so, it was also designed to adapt its outward forms to the inevitable changes of human society, and that its earliest institutions were meant to be modified when it gathered new races of men into its fold, and came into close contact with new elements of human life. The presumption does not run counter to any words, or to any clear

inference from any words, of the New Testament, and it has been universally accepted by all Christian communities. For however much Christian communities have differed among themselves as to the legitimacy or expediency of this or that particular change, they have all accepted the fact and the necessity of change, and have all diverged in greater or less degrees from the forms and practices of primitive times.

This view seeks to justify an ecclesiastical system on the grounds of expediency, and while able to make out a very strong case, is compelled to admit two points of vital importance. The one is that many institutions and elements of institutions which have sometimes been thought to belong to primitive Christianity belong, in fact, to the Middle Ages. In the minds of many persons, no doubt, the past centuries of Christianity seem to be all alike shrouded in a common mist, and the institutions of one age are not distinguishable from those of another; but it is impossible to look without regret at the reckless statements which are frequently made in reference to practices which, however great their practical value, and however great the sanction which long usage has given them, still rest upon proved utility and not upon a positive Divine command. The other point is that ecclesiastical institutions have shown a remarkable power of adapting themselves in successive ages to the new needs of men. They were not made of iron, designed to crush into a single unvarying form the innumerable types of human character or the shifting phenomena of Christian history. They were gifted with a vitality which, preserving always the same

Divine principle of life, was at the same time continually adapting their forms to meet the new conditions of society. Nor can we believe that the form under which we ourselves live is final. The wisdom of our forefathers must yield to the wisdom of our contemporaries, and the wisdom of our contemporaries will in its turn yield to the wisdom of our children. And yet it is possible even for one who accepts this inevitable law of change to look with regret at some of the ancient forms which are passing into the world of shadows, and to express the hope that from the mists of the unrealised future there may come forth institutions as fruitful for good to the souls of men as those of the beautiful but irrecoverable past.

It might be maintained that the Master from the first had in view the foundation of the Church, and that the training of the Twelve was to fit them to become the Society of Jesus, that the Lord gave to His little company sacred ceremonies which only they and their properly ordained successors could rightly administer, that the legislative decrees of this Society would always possess a Divine sanction not given to Christians outside, if indeed any could really be Christians outside its fold, and all this would be preserved by a hierarchy holy and catholic. Against these views there is a growing body of opinion that it is highly improbable that Jesus ever gave any positive precept directed towards outward separation from the Jewish community, or a formal statutory constitution of a new community.[1] There is no proof that Jesus either founded a

[1] Titius, *Lehre von der Seligheit*, p. 172.

priestly order or instituted any ecclesiastical institution. All the apocalyptic expectations supposed to have been held by the Lord are against the probability that there would be either time or purpose for any such organisation. In the days of Jesus men looked for the immediate establishment of the Kingdom of God by the appearing of the Lord from heaven with the angels. It is thought that the Master did not oppose this popular though mistaken belief, that perhaps He also shared its vivid hope.

All these views are at least matters of controversy. We are sure that Jesus taught His disciples to love one another, that He would have them unite in holy service for the good of others. Has not the time come, at the end of well-nigh two thousand years, to emphasise that which we all know to be true, rather than the points which have ever been in dispute and are in dispute still, with no indication of settlement? Why must disciples of Christ refuse to join in holy fellowship until they are of one mind upon matters concerning which neither can speak with the assurance of "thus saith the Lord"? The fellowship of all who accept Christ in the service of all who need Christ is the broad basis of true Catholic union.

III

Our Common Christianity and Christian Union

" With all lowliness of mind and unselfishness, and with patience, bearing with one another lovingly, and earnestly striving to maintain, in the uniting bond of peace, the unity given by the Spirit. There is but one body and but one Spirit, as also when you were called you had one and the same hope held out to you. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, who rules over all, acts through all, and dwells in all."

EPHESIANS vi. 4, 5, 6. Weymouth's Translation.

" If religion be a function by which either God's cause or man's cause is to be really advanced, then he who lives the life of it, however narrowly, is a better servant than he who merely knows about it, however much."

WILLIAM JAMES.

III

Our Common Christianity and Christian Union

THE growing recognition of the reality and extent of that Christianity which is common to all the Churches, accentuates the reasonableness of the enquiry, whether the denominations are justified in maintaining their old isolation and rivalry. In all quarters there is a movement towards the simplification of Christian belief. "Back to Christ" is the watchword of an increasing number who have grown weary of the complexity of theology and over-elaboration of dogma. The criticism that has restored the reality of the historic Jesus in His strong, sweet humanity, cannot be wholly mistaken, though we may smile at the conclusions of Professor Schmiedel that only nine fragments of the Gospel remain beyond dispute and these a denial of supernatural powers. There may be a reverent quest for that primary Gospel of our Lord which contains the universal and abiding elements constituting the essence of Christianity. The discovery of this primary Gospel in the Scriptures, verified by general experience, would necessarily tend to union. It is becoming more apparent not only that there is such a primary Gospel, but that it is the common inheritance of all Christians. That, however

obscure or interwoven with error and superstition, it has remained the same in all ages and is still the foundation on which all the Churches stand.

If we enquired what Christians believe, there might be some hesitation about the answer now, just as there was in the Apostolic age. But if we ask, In whom do Christians believe? there would be a response spontaneous, universal and emphatic. It would be the same if we put our enquiry to the Church at any period of her history. That answer contains our common hope, and is the ground of our general experience. It is necessary to think back to the primary faith. Dr. Martineau says that

"To heal the broken unity of Christendom, the scholar may rely on the ultimate establishment of his critical results, the ecclesiastic may plan treaties of peace and fusion of doctrine between Church and Church, but meanwhile those who find it more congenial to pass behind the whole filed of theological divergency and linger near the common springs of all human piety and hope, may perhaps be preparing some first lines of a true eirenicon."

If the dusty road of controversy is left behind for a while and the plain footpath of duty followed, those in the way soon recognise that their fellow-travellers are about the business of the same Master and are seeking the same destination. A little closer acquaintance reveals the interesting fact that they are all reading from the same guide book. The time has come for us, while not denying our differences, to emphasise the common inheritance which we have in our points of agreement. We affirm much more than we deny, and our affirmations are infinitely more important than the matters in dispute.

Common Christianity and Union

Whatever may be read into Christianity, it is primarily and essentially the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Teacher, Saviour and Lord. Allegiance to Jesus Christ is a vital element in our common Christianity. Whatever the theory of salvation, the result is the same. Jesus is the one who saves His people from their sins. In a sense that involves all the rest. He is the source, standard and strength of the Christian life. He is the Head of the Church, which is His body. It pleased the Father to give Him pre-eminence, "for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." All power is given unto Him, on earth and in heaven. Whatever other ages may reveal of the nature of Deity, for us Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. The glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ.

It may be that Churches stand or fall by their Christology. By common consent Jesus stands far above the heights attained by the noblest and purest. He alone has the right to the throne of Government in the human soul, for He is Lord of all. There is one Lord, one faith.

The movement in the direction of simplicity of belief discovers the common Christianity which in some form or other is the tap-root of the spiritual life of all the Churches. While we think of Christianity as a faith, State Churchmen and Free Churchmen are in substantial agreement. There is no clear-cut line of demarcation. The differences between us are not greater or deeper than those which exist among the Free Churches themselves or inside the Anglican Communion. If we consider Christianity as a Life resulting from the acceptance of the faith there is still greater

harmony. By common consent there is a Christian character which is unmistakable; it needs no label or certificate, it is recognisable as trees are known by the fruits they bear. It has definite qualities. It is Christ-like. This common Christianity is known by three essential notes—life, love and labour. The life derived from union with the Divine, the love of Christ shown in love for the brotherhood, and labour for the good of all, these distinctive notes may be found in strange combinations, they may be feebly expressed, but they are always present in the Christian.

Our real differences appear when we consider Christian practice as embodied in the Church viewed as an Institution with a definite order of Government, valid sacraments, and an exclusive ministry. In these matters the cleavage between the Catholic Party and Nonconformists is clear and deep. It would be mere trifling to ignore them. No union is possible or desirable that leaves them out of account. Many sincere souls have felt that they are so irreconcilable that there is nothing left but to wage the old conflict until one gives place to the other. That is a conclusion of despair which the present writer does not for a moment admit. The reasons for this position will be seen in subsequent chapters.

Worship is the heart of religion. It is the soul's adoration of and communion with God. It is made up of all those practices which express the soul's attitude toward God, and are not only useless, but without meaning unless directed toward God Himself. In worship, our differences are obvious. The Anglican Catholic claims that it is the privilege and the duty of the worshippers to

offer the most costly, and even gorgeous ritual, with the finest music, and accompaniments, because the worshippers should give their very best, even to the point of sacrifice, to make their worship of the highest order. He insists that all the ritual expresses devotion, and that it is, in itself, true worship. Our Quaker friend insists upon worship without form, sacraments or ritual, in which there is no music, and no room or need for priest, with no leader but the unseen Spirit, at whose prompting there may be silence or speech, reading or prayer, and the Real Presence manifest through all. In argument, both would advance principles in support of their practices, but really they would not be dealing with Christianity at all, but with the modes by which they seek to interpret and express their feelings. The practice of religion in worship, as in everything else, should be in harmony with, and naturally grow out of its spirit and faith. But we must keep clear in our minds the large differences between principles and practices. Christianity is not to be identified with the acts and ceremonies through which Christians express their faith.

Without any disrespect or desire to give offence, may it be suggested that worship is far more determined by matters of taste, temperament, and training than by any relation to vital principles. The Anglo-Catholic loves the sweet sensuousness of rich colour and lovely sounds, in which there is light and shade, sunny radiance and deep gloom, holy shouts of joy and triumph, and suggestions of falling tears. All these appeal to his temperament, and are in accordance with his

tastes. He is trained to appreciate them, and not unnaturally regards them as absolutely necessary to worship, and defends them as matters of principle. Sometimes in his zeal he seems to insist that they are the only right and proper way in which the Christian can worship. The Quaker, anxious to give the pre-eminence to the Divine Spirit, and to worship in sober sincerity, cannot bear the dim religious light, and will not have any bit of colour in the windows of his meeting-place that might exclude heaven's own radiance. He would concentrate all his thought and emotion upon the unseen High Priest, and cannot bear anything that would distract from the holy calm of the morning meeting. He is impatient with anything that might cause the imagination to wander into by-paths. He will have no pictures or processions, or even songs of thanksgiving, because he is supremely concerned that the soul should be conscious of God alone. Of course it may be urged that all forms are material, the spiritual comes through some medium that is human, and that the Quaker's rejection of forms in worship has become the characteristic form by which his worship is known.

If we get beneath the forms of worship to the motive and spirit of it all, the most divergent of disciples are seen to be at one. There is unity in the depths. The Alpine climber notices that the wide yearning separations in the ice that look so dangerous are only separations on the surface, they are solidly united at the base. All true worship is in spirit and in reality.[1] It is addressed

[1] JOHN iv. 23.

to God the Father. The New Testament does not seem to give any directions as to the place or the forms of worship, but there is clear and explicit teaching as to the One who alone is worthy to be worshipped, and the only acceptable motive and spirit from which worship springs, and by which it is sustained; so that forms and ceremonies or their absence do not constitute the essential things, providing that there is no violation of definite injunctions. They may or may not be advantages. It is quite possible that they may help one man and hinder another. They are matters of of personal preference rather than questions of principle.

If the religion of Christ is to be the ultimate and universal religion, its forms of worship must be sufficiently varied and elastic to enable all types of mind to express their devotion in the ways most congenial, providing that they do not violate any Scriptural injunction. There must be no suggestion that one form of service secures the Divine blessing and that another form excludes it. In the Master's teaching, the emphasis is not upon the form, but upon the spirit and motive. Can we not leave it at that, and respect the sincerity of others who claim that in a way quite different to our own the Divine presence is made known to men, and they are strengthened thereby for the common tasks of daily life. There will always be differences of taste and temperament in matters of religion. Has not the time come to frankly recognise the fact and to seek our union in other directions? Half the Christians of England may be said to find their spiritual sustenance by the help of services for which the other half, no less

sincere in their search for truth and honest in their convictions, profess to find no help but rather hindrance.

Our common Christianity may be seen by the use of the same hymns in all the Churches. Any hymn book might be put in evidence of the unity of the faith. We all delight in the hymns of adoration, praise and supplication. It does not seem incongruous for good Catholics to sing the songs of the sanctuary composed by their Dissenting brethren. Isaac Watts, John Wesley, Toplady, and a host of others are represented in Church hymnals, while the Free Churches enrich their services of praise by the hymns of the early Fathers, Roman Catholics and Anglicans, who, far as the poles asunder from the Non-conformists in matters of Church government and doctrinal interpretations, are at one with the common Christian sentiment which belongs to us all. A good hymn is undenominational, or rather inter-denominational, because it deals with the primary and vital elements of religion—faith in God, lowly dependence upon Infinite mercy, the Holy Spirit's guidance of our lives, Christ's atoning sacrifice, adoration of the Divine, trust in the Eternal purpose, and hope for the coming day—these are the elemental truths which find their way to the heart and are the common property of all.

If one attempted to state the things which are most surely believed by all who bear the Christian name, the result might not set forth all the articles of faith held by any section of the Church. It might not produce the whole creed of any individual, but it would embody the great facts of

Christianity, upon which all the Churches build and without which there could be no Christianity. The truth common to all is a striking evidence that divisions between sincere Christians do not in general amount to real contradictions, but result from each having chosen some aspect of the truth which others have not seen or have failed to emphasise. Truth has many points of view, but it is essentially one. The fact that there is a common Christianity woven in the creeds of all the Churches is a proof of the unity of the Spirit operating in them all. It is also a great help to many minds to find that the faith on which they build is the foundation common to all. That all that is most essential in the Christian faith has been verified in the lives of an innumerable multitude of persons who have differed in everything except their primary creed, and the consequent experience finding expression in a common spiritual life. Here the famous rule of Vincent of Lerins: "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*," which imposes such a terrible burden of proof upon the Church of Rome, may apply.

There is a common faith which is believed always, everywhere and by everybody called by the Christian name, it is not dependent upon ecclesiastical organisations, and indeed does not take them into account. It is the primary Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not concerned with the problems raised by the various schools of theology, it goes beyond the antagonisms and controversies that have marked the separations of denominations. It is neither Protestant nor Roman, the exclusive possession of none, yet belonging to all and forming the real work-day

creed of all. This common Christianity, to which we all turn in the hours of darkness and stress, fits into our experience and supplies our need. It is inseparable from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Our common Christianity is found in the teaching and example of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Its authority is not dependent upon Councils, Creeds or Churches. It possesses a self-evidencing power to the Christian which is quite independent of outside sanctions. It is free as the air we breathe, and cannot be monopolised by any section or community. The revolt from ecclesiastical Christianity may often be crude and mistaken in its direction, but at heart it is sound in believing that the universal and ultimate religion must be simple and free from the endless discussions involved in the battles of the Denominations and that it is far removed from all the secondary considerations of Church organisations, important as these may be in their proper place.

It is too late in the day to talk of the religion of the Church and the religion of the Chapel as if they were necessarily hostile and contradictory. So far as they are Christian, they are identical in all that is essential.

Professor Patten may be right in the affirmation that " religion begins not with the belief in God, but with an emotional opposition to the removable evils," but Christianity assuredly begins with belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is its Alpha and Omega. The Scriptures know nothing of any higher authority than the word of the Lord. " Believe in Him " is the key-note of the earliest Gospel. " Hear Him " is the direction given to

all who seek the truth. " He taught them as one having authority and not as the Scribes " is the ancient witness.

The question of authority cannot be avoided by those who hope for Christian union. It has been a rock upon which many fair schemes have been wrecked. Dr. Newman and those who followed his lead in changing their allegiance from the Anglican to the Roman Church, were influenced not only by questions of the validity of Orders and Sacraments, but the greater question of the presence in the Church of a living authority, able to speak with finality and unambiguously on matters of faith. The whole field of the discussions of this subject seems to require a fresh survey. The time is favourable, there is not now the old passion and prejudice that prevented a fair investigation of the points at issue. The need of a well-considered *rationale* of belief made necessary by the problems and discussions of our own generation, makes it imperative that any claim for authority that is objective must be more carefully grounded and more exactly defined as to its nature and extent, than is to be found in a less critical age. There is an assumption that the Church has taught with precision and definiteness on this subject which is not justified by historical fact, outside the Church of Rome, if indeed she can make good such a claim. Protestants have turned to the Scriptures for their authority and claimed to stand or fall by the text. The changed views concerning the Bible do not make the old claim impossible, though it has become more difficult. The conflict between Authority and Liberty must go on unless there can

be found some new basis upon which the doctrine of Authority can be built.

The modern mind is very suspicious of any claim to *guarantee* truth in matters of religion. It does not look for union in conformity to any external authority, but rather to an inward conviction of essential truth, recognised by the collective mind. Certitude comes not from without, but from within the individual. Any attempt to enforce the old ideas of Church authority would be met by open revolt. It is known that the Authority of Councils and Churches has been put forth in support of mistaken opinions concerning matters of fact. The Council of Trent claimed for the whole class of " unwritten traditions ' that they were received from the mouth of Christ Himself by the Apostles, or from the Apostles themselves at the direction of the Holy Ghost,' and have come down even unto us as it were from hand to hand." This authority covered a multitude of decrees of the Church, concerning beliefs and practices, no traces of which remain in the records of primitive times, they are only harmonised by great ingenuity and a generous imagination.

While fully recognising the authority of the testimony to spiritual facts of multitudes who acknowledge their reality and find their lives shaped by their faith ; we are doubtful of any external authority that claims to certify truth in the things of the spirit. No authority is required other than that of the Lord verified by the Spirit in the individual soul—the profound phenomena of the underlying unity of belief, shown in our common Christianity, independent of any official authority—is one of the most striking

discoveries of modern times. The constraining power is the truth itself. Church authority may secure uniformity of expression, but not unity of belief, that is the work of the Divine Spirit. The great truths of the Christian faith come to certitude on the authority of Him who made them current coin and reminted them in the consciousness of each succeeding generation.

The Lord has ever been too great for the official interpreters. They saw fragments of truth and were continually mistaking the part for the whole. It requires all the views to interpret Him, and then there will be need of the collective confession. "Now we know in part." The Lord Jesus Christ has a world-wide mission. He came not to the Jew only, but to the Gentile also, because "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ died for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world. He sent His disciples forth to all the world. He is claimed by all, to Him they each appeal in their divisions and in Him they find their common unity. The unifying influence of a simplification of the Faith is felt in all the Churches. There is a natural fear in timid minds of any restatements of belief. There are those who say with Newman, "Dogma has been the fundamental principle of my religion." There are the obscurantists who step forward, Bible in hand, to check the inquiries of the geologist, the astronomer, or the political economist from an apprehension that the cause of religion can be endangered by them. There is no doubt that

irresponsible critics have really hampered devout Biblical criticism by the expression of their ill-matured and wildly extravagant opinions. The extremists invariably make for the forces of reaction. The controverises which are raised, and particularly the spirit in which they are conducted, are hostile to the best interests of religion. Yet the conviction grows in all directions that beneath all the differences of interpretation there is a Common Faith. The men who are widely separated in discussion are very near in their devotions. The great affirmations without which there can be no religion touch the centre of unity. Men who believe in God have more in common and are closer akin than those who follow the same profession, are comrades in arms, or exponents of the same political principles. Their faith is the same in the deepest and most vital thing in their lives, they have in some way realised the Deity in whom they live and move and have their being. The open vision is the bond of comradeship. However far apart men are, there is no power that can make them unsee that which once they saw. The elements of our common Christianity have been revealed to all, they are in the primary facts of experience. They are expressed in the Scriptures and indeed all who come to speak of the soul's relationship to God must, to be intelligent, use the same simple language of the heart. This consciousness will carry us far towards unity. It kills the old denominationalism that only thrives upon envy, ignorance and misunderstanding. All the Churches are needed to interpret the common faith. One sees this view, another that. We shall

never all get exactly the same view, though we look in the same direction and see the same object. This elementary fact is working its way through all the denominations, and as a result there is less said concerning the sectional and particular "isms." The common Christianity becomes clearer and the private interpretation more obscured. There may be strong personal forces at work, maintaining the old sectarian divisions, but the Divine Spirit makes for unity.

> "For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
> Seem here no painful inch to gain,
> Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
> Comes silent, flooding in, the main."

The next reinterpretation of the faith will not be in the terms of any one Church, but in the language of the universal and primary Gospel, that holds the best of all that has been taught by the Sects. Christ is Christianity, the recognition of that truth may create a new Catholicism in which the old divisions will have no place. Men will be drawn together who possess the common life, and thrilled by brotherly love and desire to labour for the common good in the Spirit of the Lord. This is the Holy Catholic Church of which multitudes are dreaming.

IV

Our Common Christian Experience and Christian Union

"Brotherhood in the truth is a relationship devoid of self-interest and uninfluenced by party ends. It is frank, guileless, sincere; it knows nothing of rivalry, it is not vexed when temperamental tendencies lead to variation in modes of expression. It is a comprehensive, generous fellowship, in the spirit more than in the letter. Back of it lies the conviction that God, who ordained these temperamental variations, must intend, by means of them, to effect a broader revelation of the truth."

DR. CHARLES C. HALL.

"The source of the Christian religion is the experience of Jesus, and a man is a Christian just to the degree in which he experiences the filial piety of Jesus."

AUGUSTE SABATIER.

IV

Our Common Christian Experience and Christian Union

THE recognition of a common Faith leads us to expect a common witness in all the Churches to the great facts of Christian experience. What Henry Drummond describes as "the contemporary activities of the Holy Ghost" are practically the same wherever they are seen. "By their fruits ye shall know them" is the word of the great Teacher. If it is asked, "Are the fruits of the Spirit restricted to one denomination, or are they manifested alike by worshippers in stately cathedral, ancient abbey, little Bethel and Zion, with their bare whitewashed walls, and barn-like exteriors?" there is only one answer.

Spiritual life through all the ages is the same in its essential characteristics. The inner experience which is the witness to vital belief in the Lord Jesus Christ varies in degree, but not in kind. All confess to that original and unborrowed experience of Divine illumination. Professor James, in describing the varieties of religious experience, has demonstrated the unity of religious experience. There would be no difficulty in setting forth the harmony of testimony to the great facts of Christian experience from the biographies of the controversialists of the Churches. They

fought over definitions, they were one in their devotions. When the great souls bowed in prayer, they used the same language. The temple of truth has many doors. We only see that by which we enter. Yet we are bound to recognise in the Holy of Holies the presence of those who did not come in at our entrance. We are not seeking uniformity in experience. That is not the order in Divine grace. As in Nature there is infinite variety and vital unity, so in spiritual life. Through all and in all living things there is the same essential substance. All Christians possess a common life. They are twice born. They have received the communication of the Divine nature by the operation of the Holy Spirit, through the Word.

The new birth is not dependent upon knowledge. Some Christians are greatly troubled that their conversion was not vividly marked as in the experience of others. But they are looking for uniformity, which does not exist. They think of John Bunyan with his weeks of mental anguish, his tears and prayers and bitter agony, followed by the inrush of joy and assurance that came like a flood of light suddenly into a dark chamber, dispelling all the gloom. But "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." We pass from death unto life because God, "who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Behind all the forms is the force.

If a man plunge into the vulgar vices which marred the early life of the Bedford pilgrim, he

might expect to repeat Bunyan's experience of remorse and penitence. There would probably be all the dramatic vividness that colours the story of his conversion, but if he lived as St. Timothy, in the atmosphere of faith, the awakening of the soul would have none of these accompaniments. It might be as imperceptible as the fading of the dawn into the radiance of the morning. It would almost seem that the faith had descended from the grandmother Lois and mother Eunice. The fact of birth is just as real in the one case as in the other.

If, as the author of the "Philosophy of Christian Experience" asserts, "conversion means the actual moral reconstruction of us, the transforming of what we are," the suddenness or gradualness are entirely secondary considerations. In some, the process is as a flash of light on the road to Damascus; in others, it is so gradual as to be practically imperceptible, but the result is the same. Conversion is the soul in contact with Christ, becoming Christ-like. Dr. Starbuck, in the "Psychology of Religion," has an illuminating chapter on "Religious Feelings in Adult Life," which he sums up thus:

> "The number of persons in the doubt and reconstruction group who recorded specific feelings was greater than that of the gradual growth group by as much as the ratio of ten to seven. This would seem to show that those whose religion has once become partially objective, and whose faith has been reconstructed, religion is fully as vital as with those whose growth has been uneventful."

The clear evidence of spiritual life is growth. The character may develop in spiritual crises, as when the soul wrestles with some temptation as

Jacob wrestled with the angel that famous night when his life was changed, and he became a Prince with God ; or the growth may be in harmonious stages one gliding into another unconsciously and orderly, as the unfolding of a flower. There may be that tragedy of arrested development which results from disobedience, but the Christian cannot stay in that state. It is not the will of the heavenly Father that His children should live stunted lives, they are to grow in grace, and go from strength to strength. Growth in grace follows obedience to the injunction, " Be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." It is not the privilege of a few chosen spirits, but the birthright of all. It is the evidence of life, the working out of our own salvation, because God worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Growth in Christ-likeness is the hall-mark of genuine discipleship. It is not dependent upon connection with one Church rather than another, or the reception of any particular set of theological opinions. It is the common experience of all who have put on Christ. A quaint little story is told of Archbishop Fénelon. Once, as he walked along the countryside, he came upon a cow that had strayed from its rightful pasture. He recognised it as belonging to a poor widow, whom he knew to be a Huguenot. He led the animal back to the owner, and seeking to improve the occasion, said, " Where was your Church two hundred years ago ? " " Monseigneur," she replied with a woman's courtesy and readiness, " my Church was in all good hearts like yours." She had found the

truth, when she claimed the Archbishop in virtue of his loving charity as a member of the true and apostolic Church. If it be right that where Christ is there is the Church, then there is the larger Church of all good hearts in which the Lord dwells.

It is hardly possible to imagine three characters more strikingly dissimilar than Brother Lawrence, Christmas Evans and Dr. Baedeker. Brother Lawrence is known to the world by a little book on " The Practice of the Presence of God." It is known and loved by thousands of devout souls, though it is but a simple record of conversations and fragments of letters written by an illiterate person, whose knowledge was the result of his own experience, and yet if a good conscience be the best divinity, he was a very able Divine.

Nicholas Herman of Lorraine is described as a mean and unlearned man, who, after having been a soldier and a footman, became a lay brother among the barefooted Carmelites in Paris about 1666. He was afterwards known as Brother Lawrence. His conversion at the age of eighteen originated in the high notion he had of the wisdom and power of God. He says that in the winter, seeing a tree stripped of its leaves, and considering that within a little time the leaves would be renewed, and after that, the flowers and fruit appear, he received a high view of the providence and power of God, which had never since been effaced from his soul; that this view had set him free from the world and kindled in him such a love for God that he could not tell whether it had increased in the forty years that he had lived since; that there needed neither art nor science for

going to God, but only a heart resolutely determined to apply itself to nothing but Him, or for His sake, and to love Him only. After his conversion, he grew wonderfully in the knowledge and love of God, endeavouring day by day to live as in His presence, and to direct all his actions to His glory. In his prayers, and in his work, he sought to be the same, so likewise in his business in the kitchen, for he was cook to the community; having accustomed himself to do everything for the love of God and with prayer upon all occasions for His grace to do his work well, he found everything easy.

Brother Lawrence had found such advantage in walking in the presence of God that it was natural for him to recommend it earnestly to others, but his example was a stronger inducement than any argument he could propose. His countenance was radiant, such a sweet and calm devotion appearing in it as could not but affect the beholders, and it was observed that in the greatest hurry of business in the kitchen, he still preserved his recollection and heavenly-mindedness. He was never hasty nor loitering, but did each thing in its season with an even uninterrupted composure and tranquillity of spirit. "The time of business," he said, "does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were on my knees." He taught that the whole substance of religion was faith, hope and charity, by the practice of which we become united to the will of God; that all beside is indifferent and to be used as a means

that we may arrive at our end and be swallowed up therein by faith and charity; that all things are possible to him that believes, that they are less difficult to him who hopes, and are more easy to him who loves, and still more easy to him who perseveres in the practice of these three virtues; that we ought, without anxiety, to accept the pardon of our sins from the blood of Jesus Christ, only endeavouring to love Him with all our hearts. This simple soul learned the way of the higher life, and lived it so well that it is still reflected in the conversations which bear his name. In the midst of mediæval ceremony and superstition, he learned that the humblest believer may set up an oratory in his heart, and there find God.

Christmas Evans, the Welsh preacher, whose zeal for Protestant Evangelism so deeply stirred the people of Wales, has left a fragrant memory, beloved by the whole Principality. A man of great fervour of spirit, of strong emotions, his passion for righteousness led him to great extravagances. He possessed the eloquence of the orator and the imagination of the poet. After his conversion his life was devoted to evangelising among his own people. He tells the story of the gracious visitation that changed his life, as follows :

"I was very weary of a cold heart toward Christ and His sacrifice and the work of the Spirit, of a cold heart in the pulpit and secret prayer and in the study. For fifteen years previously, I had felt my heart burn within me, as if going to Emmaus with Jesus. On a day ever remembered by me, as I was going from Dolgelly to Machynlleth, when climbing up toward Cader Idris, I considered it was incumbent on me to pray, however hard I felt my heart, and however worldly the frame of

my spirit was. Having begun in the name of Jesus, I soon felt, as it were, the fetters loosening and the old hardness softening, and, as I thought, the mountains of frost and snow dissolving and melting within me. This engendered confidence in my soul in the promise of the Holy Ghost. I felt my whole mind relieved from some great bondage, the tears flowed copiously, and I was constrained to cry out for the gracious visits of God, by restoring to my soul the joy of His salvation, and that He would visit the churches in Anglesey that were under my care.

"I embraced in my supplications all the churches of the saints and nearly all the ministers of the Principality by their names. This struggle lasted for three hours, it rose again and again like one wave after another, or a high flowing tide driven by a strong wind, until my nature became faint by weeping and crying. Thus I resigned myself to Christ, body and soul, gifts and labours, all my life, every day, and every hour that remained for me, and all my cares I committed to Christ. The road was mountainous and lonely, and I was wholly alone and suffered no interruption in my wrestling with God. From this time, I was led to expect the goodness of God to the churches and to myself. The result was when I returned home, the first thing that arrested my attention was that the Spirit was working also in the brethren in Anglesey."

Here we may note that as Christmas Evans came nearer in consciousness to his Lord, his vision broadened, and his sympathies went out to others that he could pray for all the saints and the ministers of all the Churches. In the years that followed, in simple dependence upon the Divine power, he went from place to place, declaring the Gospel. There is scarcely a spot in Wales where his name is not familiar, and where stories of his radiant smile and happy voice are not known.

Dr. Baedeker is a totally different character. Quiet and retiring in spirit, analytical in mind, he was for more than twenty years an unbeliever in the realities of religion. His biographer describes

him at the time of his conversion as forty-three years old, quietly antagonistic to Christianity, apparently a decided sceptic. At this time he was invited by a friend to attend some meetings arranged by Lord Radstock. At last he went, and as soon as the address was over, endeavoured to retire. But Lord Radstock announced a further gathering for prayer, and induced him to remain. Mr. Latimer says :

"During those solemn moments a work was done in Dr. Baedeker whereby the accumulated infidelity of years was dissipated for ever. He entered that meeting a proud German infidel, and came out a humble believing disciple in the Lord Jesus Christ. Being now a changed man, he began a different life. A man who had for years been in delicate health, who dare not even venture upon a walk with his wife without taking precautionary measures in case of heart failure, who was looked upon by all his acquaintances as foredoomed to an early grave . . . flung aside his medicine bottles and stepped forth in the vigour of manhood's prime to serve Christ without an interval of serious illness for forty years."

He began to proclaim the evangel of the Cross, and soon found wonderful opportunities for the exercise of a wide and blessed ministry.

"From the banks of the Rhine . . . to the last desperate penal settlement of Saghalien, and from the princely homes of devout nobles in Stockholm to the rough and bare settlements of Stundist exiles, in the Caucasus at the foot of Mount Ararat, roved this apostle of two Continents. Dr. Baedeker devoted himself chiefly to the imprisoned and ignorant. He had found a new ambition, a new objective. The love of Christ constrained him to seek to bring blessing to those out of the way. His was the passion of his Master, just as Wesley, Whitefield, Father Damien, Spurgeon and Barnardo received a new impetus that made them pioneers and reformers, so Dr. Baedeker, in contact with the Redeemer, heard the voice 'Whom

shall I send ? and who will go for us ? ' and throughout his life ever answered ' Here am I, send me.' "

These three men, Brother Lawrence, Christmas Evans and Dr. Baedeker, are divided by time, nationality, social status, and nearly all the forces which create gulfs between men. Yet their witness to the common Christian experience is substantially identical. They bear the same testimony to the reality of the presence of God, to the communion between the soul and the Saviour, to the happiness that comes to those who seek to do the Divine will, to the love for the brotherhood. The fruits of the Spirit are on different trees, but they are of the same species.

Professor Inge says :

" It will be found that men of pre-eminent saintliness agree very closely in what they tell us. They tell us that they have arrived at an unshakeable conviction, not based on inference but on immediate experience, that God is a Spirit, with whom the human spirit can hold intercourse, that in Him meet all that they can imagine as goodness, truth and beauty, that they can see His footprints everywhere in nature, and feel His presence within them, as the very life of their life, so that in proportion as they come to themselves, they come to Him. They tell us what separates us from Him and from happiness is first, self-seeking in all its forms, and secondly, sensuality in all its forms, that these are the ways of darkness and death which hide us from the face of God, while the path of the just is like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The testimony of the saints in all the Churches, when they speak of experience, is in the same strain. Nothing is more striking than their unity in the deeper things. Beneath the variety of opinion, Cardinal Newman, Henry Drummond, Father Tauler, Principal Caird, Madame Guyon,

Mrs. Booth, Dr. Clifford and the Archbishop of Canterbury, all witness to a common experience of life in Christ. They tell of dependence, faith, oneness with God, yearning after a higher life and happiness in service, these are the primary things of of Christian experience. They are universal. The consciousness of communion with God gives reality to everything else. It is the common breath of the saints. Without it they cannot exist. Dr. James, summing up the varieties of religious experience, comes to this conclusion :

"We and God have business with each other, and in opening ourselves to His influence, our deepest destiny is fulfilled. The universe, at those parts of it which our personal being constitutes, takes a turn genuinely for the worse or for the better in proportion as êach one of us fulfils or evades God's demands."

We have seen that the flowers of the faith do not grow all in one garden, the type of character which is recognised as Christian is not the special monopoly of any one ecclesiastical organisation, nor is it restricted to those who are distinguished by any one theological badge. The fruits of the Spirit are not denominational. They are not the creation of man, but the work of God. In this common life there is the answer to the Lord's prayer, that all believers may be one with Him, as He is one with the Father. The Churches suffer from narrow vision and restrained charity. Exclusion is not a Christian grace; there is no wisdom in shutting our eyes to the beauty of the flowers growing in our neighbour's garden. Our denominational walls, as Dr. Maclaren once reminded the Baptist Union, may still have the broken glass along the top, but they are low

enough to allow us to look over. We do not betray our particular Church by recognising the saints in the other Churches. Why should we wish to deny their presence? The Gospel comes to all who open their hearts to receive it. He who makes the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust is no respecter of persons. He shows no ecclesiastical preferences. Those who loudly proclaim their differences, demonstrate their vital union, as soon as they touch the region of fundamental Christian experience. It was the beloved disciple who wrote, "Let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." The true believers are the doers, and the results of obedience are the fruits of the Spirit.

Truth in any matter is not easy to find, though we may never give up the quest. In theology there is so much that can never be known this side of the grave, that there is imperative need of the temper of sweet reasonableness and large toleration. The simple, homely, Christian graces are clear and plain. They are self-evident, and require no argument. They may be put in operation here and now. Without them, the most faultless theology will be useless, for in truth *Pectus facit theologum*, "the heart makes the theologian." Can we fail to recognise that the same Divine Spirit to whom we owe every virtue we possess, is also present in the experience of the people with whom we do not agree; that after all, unity is not dependent upon speculative opinion, but grace? Jesus said "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, that ye love one another." The essential elements of the Christian life are very

few, and quite simple. They need no discussion. They demonstrate their own presence and worth. They express the unity of all believers, for they come from one source, are one in kind, and make for for one goal. These are the things that really matter, that bring assurance. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "If a man love not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" We may always differ in doctrine and opinion, our differences may be the outcome of our temperament, taste, or ancestry, but we may be one in that which in the final analysis is the only abiding reality. Suppose that any of us knew all theological mysteries, had all knowledge, so that the deep things would be clear and plain, and the problems easy to solve, and that our zeal for the truth was strong enough to provide enduring courage that would enable us to give our bodies to be burnt, and had not love, it would profit us nothing. The greatest of all the Christian graces is love. It beareth all things, even division; believeth all things, even the best about theological opponents. "Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For now we know in part and we prophesy in part: but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

V

Church Systems in the Apostolic Age and Christian Unity.

" The Church Universal, with all its confusions, is our inheritance, and its confusions are a part of our inheritance, and if, instead of rejecting the Church because of its confusions, we study these, we are likely to find certain aspects of order emerge in the midst of the disorder. Some things will stand out clearly. For instance, in every age and land, whatever its confusions, the great Christian community has had the gift of producing a high and great type of character; and such a type surely implies an unsuspected unity."—T. R. GLOVER.

" Different Churches embody different types of Christian life, and the types thus embodied are a lesson and an enrichment of the whole."—DR. AGAR BEET.

V

Church Systems in the Apostolic Age and Christian Unity.

The Reformation gave rise to a wonderful development of ecclesiastical organisations. The Reformers having broken away from the Roman Catholic Church, with its imperialistic government, went to the Scriptures, to find there the Divine pattern of Church organisation. They looked for a model system, as the pattern of the Tabernacle shown to Moses. They believed that the Divine Head of the Church gave by inspired writers definite directions for the ordering of the Church in all ages. They thought that the Apostolic Church had one fixed and unvarying form of organisation and government, that it was the Divine design upon which all Churches should be built. They held that it was the duty of all believers to accept the precept and example taught in the Scriptures, and that all else was a snare and a delusion. The Apostolic Church was the only authoritative body to which all Christian communities were bound to submit. The authority was not because of antiquity or catholicity, much less the practice of the Fathers, but because the Church in the Bible was under the infallible rule and guidance of men directly inspired by the Holy Spirit. This made its

organisation, as set forth in the Scriptures, legitimately binding upon all believers.

They declared that the Church of Rome had departed from the true Church, and was contrary to the revealed pattern, and therefore no longer to be regarded as Christ's Church, but as Babylon and anti-Christ. In their destructive criticism, they were agreed. It was easy to paint a lurid contrast between the Apostolic Church and the Roman organisation, but when they began the constructive work of Church building, they came to the parting of the ways.

Believing the Scriptures to be the infallible revelation of the mind of God, they accepted their instructions as the end of the controversy. Their doctrine of the right of private judgment was not a plea to set aside the authority of the Bible in order that men might think as they pleased about religion, recognising no authority above their own judgment. By the right of private judgment, they asserted the right of the individual Christian to listen to God when God speaks to him, and the right to receive that direct teaching of the Holy Spirit through the illumination which is the privilege of all believers.

The Reformers, agreeing upon the fundamental Doctrines of Grace, did not come to the same unanimity upon questions of Church organisation and government. Their study of the documents led them to different conclusions. They produced different systems of Church polity, for which they claimed Scriptural authority. They were as men who set out to photograph the same person, developed their negatives and made their prints, and then, discovering that they had obtained three

different pictures, fell to disputing, each claimng that his photograph was the only correct one. Protestantism has evolved distinct forms of Church order—the Episcopalian, as represented in the Lutheran, Moravian and the Church of England ; the Presbyterian, as developed in the Huguenot, the Quaker, the Scotch and the Methodist Churches ; the Congregational, such as the Independent, Anabaptist, Baptist, and the Brethren. These three distinct types representing government by Bishops, Presbytery and the Congregation, have been advocated and defended each to the exclusion of the others as the one and only scriptural Church order.

The remarkable fact is that from the Reformation until now, men have gone to the New Testament and have found widely different forms of Church organisation. Were they insincere, seeking nothing more than to discover texts to support their own preconceived ideas ? Were they utterly mistaken, honest, yet left to blunder in error without that kindly Light which was promised to guide those who seek the way of truth ? May it not be that in the sacred records themselves there is at least something to justify and to suggest each of these three forms of Church government ? Does not this seem to be the only explanation of the fact that earnest and absolutely honest men find sufficient warrant for contending for a different form of Church order ?

It is unnecessary to travel again the well-known path. It is clear that the Church at Jerusalem immediately after Pentecost, had the minimum of organisation. All authority and discipline centred in the Apostolic Fellowship.

They were responsible for ministering the Word of God, the ordinances of Baptism and the Supper, and they served tables. As these duties grew, they, with the consent of the rest, delegated to others their least important work. This is the earliest form of Church order. It has no resemblance to modern organisation, for the simple reason that it was unorganised.

The Apostolic Fellowship held together by the Apostles' teaching and the breaking of bread. Their loving care for the poor gave practical expression to the reality of their brotherhood. They had no sanctuaries of their own in which to assemble for public worship. The Church met in the homes of its members for its more private instruction. It has a delightfully domestic aspect and family appearance. It was the period of the Church in the house. Disciples were compelled to use the Temple services. They were at prayers in the old church, though they broke their bread from house to house, eating their food with singleness of heart, and eucharistic gladness. Their fellowship meetings were social and sacred, a love feast and a sacrament. In the Temple courts they proclaimed the Gospel to the unconverted and talked together of the twice-born. The Church in its earliest phase of existence appears without any settled organisation. Its model is the family; its government, paternal and domestic.

There are the scantiest records of any positive regulations, and no details. We have no means of knowing what was the Church's original constitution, beyond the fragmentary information in the New Testament. There are principles for

guidance, but no pattern to copy. The Church in the Old Testament was the embodiment of distinct instruction and command. Its details were set forth. In the New Testament, instead of directions, there is the living Director, the one Spirit. The instructions are written not with ink, not in tables of stone, but in human hearts by the Spirit of the living God.[1] The final decision of the Spiritual Church is, "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." To the elders at Ephesus it is said, "The Holy Spirit hath made you bishops to feed the Church of God."[2] The evangelist succeeds in winning men for Christ when the preaching is in the Holy Spirit. There are varieties of gifts among the disciples, and variations of government, but one Spirit operating and guiding all who submit themselves to His influence. In the study of secondary causes it is easy to miss the Cause of all. The New Testament Church was not constructed by a polity, but controlled by a Presence; not directed, but led. There is not a guide book, but a Guide.

Jesus ordained, *i.e.*, chose men for service as He willed, there does not appear to have been any form or ceremony in connection with His appointments. It is one of the vicious habits of theological controversy that Scripture terms are employed with totally different meanings from those which they have in their original context.

The entrance to the ministry in the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic years had small attraction for any but consecrated enthusiasts. There were no worldly gains, and much labour, opposition and

[1] COR. ii. 3.
[2] ACTS XX. 28.

persecution. There were not crowds of candidates. Yet some "unruly and vain talkers," for filthy lucre's sake, had even then entered the teacher's office; their numbers increased as the ministry became a profession rather than a vocation. It seems that a man possessing the qualifications, if he felt the quickening call of the Holy Spirit, began to exercise the office straightway either as an evangelist, teacher or pastor.[1] Some were warned against entering the office.[2] Paul and Barnabas selected elders in every city on their journey, but there is nothing about any form of ordination except that they "prayed with fasting." Paul laid his hands upon the candidate, which we think meant simply an indication of choice; certainly there is no ceremony or part of a ceremony which forms an essential feature in the records of Apostolic ordination. In the first chapter of the Acts, we read of the order of the appointment of a successor to Judas. Matthias, the one ordained, does not appear to have received any special grace or power through the ceremony; we never hear of him afterwards. It seems impossible to determine exactly how men were recognised as teachers; their genuineness was tested by the believers and by them approved or denied. The Church verified, but did not commission. This is the view of Harnack[3] and many others.

The Churches were to try the spirits because there were false teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing; that has always been so. The test of

[1] See 1 TIM. iii., TITUS i.
[2] JAMES iii. 1.
[3] *Expansion of Christianity*, p. 418.

Apostolic succession is the accomplishment of Apostolic work. The tent maker and the fisherman might be greatly surprised if they could hear the disputes about succession to their positions. Perhaps they would say, "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren."

The form of ordination to the ministry is not the supreme matter; there may be various ways, each equally real and valid, in which men receive the call and the right to become ministers in the Church of Christ. St. Paul referred to the gift for ministry that Timothy received with the "laying on of the hands of the presbytery,"[1] and to the same gift as received through the laying on of his own hands.[2] Probably Paul with the presbytery laid hands on Timothy when he was set apart for service, but Paul himself came into the ministry in quite another way. Was he, therefore, without the authority to minister in holy things? God has many means to the same end. Let us beware of the tyranny of a type. All spiritual power is the gift of God, and the presence of the power is the evidence of the authority to minister. Free Church ministers, when they are urged to seek episcopal ordination, simply claim that they have already received all that is needful for their office; they minister the grace and are the channels through whom the Divine Spirit is working. In support of their claim, they can produce all that the Anglican clergy can bring in evidence of their claim. Some day we may agree that by many methods God confers power and authority upon His servants, lest any of them

[1] TIM. iv. 14.
[2] 2 TIM. i. 6.

should come to mistake the means for the Master and ascribe to a ceremony that which comes from the Lord.

The first steps in the development of the Apostolic Church were taken by the Fellowship as a whole.[1] Afterwards there was the appointment of seven men, as a special order of officers approved by the whole Church, to undertake the business of the daily ministration to the widows, so that the Apostles might continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word. Later, the Church of Jerusalem appointed elders; their duties are not clearly defined, though the office became general. Deacons were appointed much later, to assist the elders in the work of benevolence and to give spiritual assistance and consolation. There is very little to indicate the specific duties attached to these offices. They are mentioned incidentally and no details are given. When the Church at Jerusalem heard of the Gentile awakening at Antioch, a discussion arose as to the condition upon which converts should be received into the Fellowship. The decision was determined by the entire company, and then it pleased the Apostles and elders *with the whole Church* to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, and they wrote letters by them after this manner: "*The apostles and elders and brethren* send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles."[2] These are instances of democratic government, the Church acting as its own Parliament. In the letters to Timothy and Titus there seems to have been another form

[1] ACTS i. 26.
[2] ACTS XV. 23.

of organisation. Timothy was appointed to his office of overseer by Paul, and was charged to appoint other faithful men to do the work of the ministry which was divided among bishops, deacons and elders. Titus was left in Crete to set things in order and to select elders as Paul had chosen him.

There is a growing body of opinion among modern historians that the administrative forms in which the Church gradually came to be organised were determined by the state of society and the spirit of the age. The offices in the Church seem to have expanded to meet the needs of the growth of the organisation. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians there is the clearest description of the meetings of the earliest communities of Christians. The brethren appear to have had three distinct meetings—one for prayer and exhortation, another for thanksgiving, which began with a common meal and ended with the Lord's Supper, and a third for matters of business. These have developed into public worship, the service of the Communion, and the gathering called a Church meeting. There is little allusion to officers of any kind. Other Churches seem to have possessed even less organisation.

The Church seems to have called into service the form of ministry that was best suited to its needs. At Rome and Corinth the general "gifts" provided all that was required. Dr. Lindsay says:

"There is not a trace of the idea that the Churches had to be organised from above in virtue of powers conferred by our Lord, officially and specially, upon certain of their members. On the contrary, the power from above which was truly there was *in* the community, a direct gift from the Master Himself."

The Bishop of Oxford on this remarks that "We can accept Dr. Lindsay's theory of origins." He would reject the view that the local Church was independent of the main body. In this we think he is justified, though we cannot accept his conclusions that the Church in any subsequent period by virtue of a decision of a General Council could bind all generations to accept a particular order of ministry to the exclusion of all others.

"Though the Lord commanded His disciples to form a society, there is no indication that either He or His apostles ever prescribed any definite form for it."[1] It is clear that there were marked differences of organisation in the Apostolic Churches. There were probably characteristic differences between the Judæo-Christian Church and all others. There were striking differences between some of the Gentile Churches and others. The Churches in the Pisidian Antioch, in Iconium, and in Lystra and Derbe were within a year or two placed under the guidance of elders. In the Epistles to the Churches at Corinth and Rome, there is no mention of elders or deacons. In the Corinthian Church there were varied ministries, which seem to indicate that no ordained ministers were settled there. The organisation appears to have been determined by local needs and therefore developed along different lines.

If we follow the history of the primitive Church immediately after the Apostolic age, as it appears in those interesting relics, the *Didache*, the fragments of which are sources of the Apostolic Canons, and the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, we find considerable development of organisation. These

[1] Gwatkin.

documents probably belong to the period between 100 and 180 A.D. The first gives a glimpse of the Church directed by "overseers and deacons," the second by the "bishop or pastor," a session of elders and a body of deacons with the elders exercising rule over the bishop and congregation. The third depicts a three-fold ministry of bishop, elders and deacons at the head of each local congregation. These documents are only referred to in support of the argument that the early Churches were not organised according to one pattern and did not follow one unvarying type of development.[1]

There is nothing in the *Didache* about any ordination or appointment of local bishops and deacons by any superior order; only about their election by the whole community. In the letters of Ignatius of Antioch there are many references to the bishop and the deference which is his due. We read, "Ye should do nothing without the bishop," "As many as are of God and of Jesus Christ, they are with the bishop," "Do ye all follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and the presbytery as the Apostles; and the deacons pay respect as to God's commandment." "Let that be held to be a valid eucharist which is under the bishop or one to whom he shall have committed it." "It is good to recognise God and the bishop." "He that honoureth the bishop is honoured of God; he that doeth aught without the knowledge of the bishop rendereth service to the devil." Bishop Gore rightly says, "We find a witness to episcopacy of extra-

[1] See *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, p. 169.

ordinary force in Ignatius the bishop." But why this extraordinary force unless the claim of the bishop to such power and eminence in the Church was disputed ?

"It is not a mark of the weakness of Christianity, but of its immense power to stimulate human nature on all sides and to adapt itself to all varieties of circumstances that it has produced such distinct types of teaching as we see even in the New Testament, and such varieties of organisation as diversify the history of the Church from the earliest times to our own. We have no call to shed tears over such phenomena, or to beat our breasts in public and talk about the sin of schism. There is no reason why the unity of the Church should not be conspicuous through all the varieties of doctrinal type and legal organisation."[1]

Those who contend for the hierarchical form as the only valid order may be reminded of the words of the friendly author of "Absente Reo" :

"It is a matter of opinion whether the hierarchical system is the only development of Christianity. Every learner is rapidly hearing that it is not possible to claim the earliest authority for it. You know the simple argument, the word ἱερεύς (priests) was familiar to all those who wrote the New Testament. Jewish priests, heathen priests, they were part of the common-place of life everywhere. Applying the word constantly to the officials of other religions, why did these writers not apply it to the officials of the Christian religion ? However firmly we may hold that it was a right development, we must admit that there is no evidence that compels either reason or pious sentiment to accept it on the authority of Scripture."

However widely theologians differ in their views as to the constitution of the Church, they are all agreed that in the New Testament writings, the Church is always represented as a unit. As there was one assembly of the congregation of Israel,

[1] Dr. Denney:

one sovereign assembly of the Greek city State, so there is but one Church of Christ. This may be seen from the use of the term in the New Testament. It was first of all applied to the Christian community of Jerusalem. Then to the little companies of believers in Judæa and Antioch, and later to the scattered communities in Asia and throughout the world. The Christian Society in each place being the local representative of the entire Fellowship, each separate company of believers constituted the Church, competent to discharge all its spiritual functions, and to manifest the corporate life of the Christian faith. The unity of the Church is not an afterthought brought about by a deliberate process of confederation on the part of a number of independent societies. Dr. Hort lays stress upon the fact that in Paul's view, as stated in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the members which make up one ecclesia are not communities, but individual men. One does not find that each local Church is self-contained and complete without relation to or responsibility for others, or that when Churches enter into the closest associations, they are still as an aggregation of crystals, each distinct and entire, shaped and consolidated by its own internal forces.

We find the Church adapting governmental forms belonging to the locality in which it is situated, and with which it is familiar by long usage. These are not exact reproductions of their original in the synagogue, the Sanhedrin or the State. They are altered and adapted as circumstances require. There is the congregation with its real corporate legislating for its own members, choosing

its own officers, providing for its own needs, strong, self-contained, There is something like a presbytery creating order in all the scattered assemblies, and co-ordinating the ministry to the needs of the hour. The rule seems to be in the hands of the few, chosen for the office because they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and wise to guide. There is also that which easily corresponds to an episcopacy, the strong personalities, men of dominating influence, chosen from the whole Brotherhood for their fitness to lead the flock in the way of Christ, and to have the care of the Churches in their gracious keeping. Peter, Paul and John may very well have been the leaders and have successively held the primacy of love and influence in the early days, not as lords over God's heritage, but as the servants of all, honoured and accepted because of the grace which was given them. If either order is followed alone to its natural goal, there is one of the three forms of Church organisation as we have them to-day. But is it necessary to select one and develop it to the exclusion of the others? May not all three have been needed to express the varied moods of the mind and to meet the temperamental needs of different people? Each may have its contribution to make to the one Church, just as each may have its root in the earliest life of the Church; that which by over-emphasis is contradictory was originally supplementary and harmonious.

The figures under which the Church is represented are symbols of unity. Believers are disciples, bound together in their allegiance to one Teacher, who taught as one having authority and

not as the scribes, and whose words had life and sanctifying power. They form the household of faith, united by domestic ties to the Head of the house. They dwell under the one roof having their own duties to discharge; still closer they are brethren, born in the family of faith, each related to the Elder Brother. They are heirs with Him of the Kingdom of God. There is one family. They may be scattered, that is, sown as seeds are sown, in different parts of the world, but their family relationship is not determined by the place where they dwell. They are one body, members one of another, distinct as the myriad cells, united as the joints fitly framed together, mutually dependent, so that the eye may not say to the ear, "I have no need of thee." They are a habitation, a temple, a building of many parts, structurally complete and harmonious, each believer a living stone, and all believers necessary to the edifice. They are the bride of Christ, His loved one, and, in a well-known passage, the Church which is His body and fulness, is also described as Himself, for as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ. With wonderful honour the Church stands for her Lord.

The Church of Christ in the New Testament is such a unity that there is no room for distinctions of class, caste, colour and position, which have been as party walls separating men. The Church not only stretches hands across the seas, but embraces men of every race and language. Within her borders there is neither bond nor free, Jew nor Gentile, barbarian nor Scythian,

male nor female, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. The unity of the Spirit already exists; it is not within human power to create that unity. It is to be preserved in the bond of peace.

The Church is a Brotherhood of souls. Its simplicity is beautiful and striking. All are children baptised into one body. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a true member of the Brotherhood because he is in the body, a child of God, and therefore related to all the other children of the Divine Father. In the human family, our sisters do not cease to belong to us when they are no longer called by our name. Relationship is not determined by geography. We may worship in the Abbey or the back room, we may not know of each other's existence, and yet be bound together by the same Divine life. Real unity consists in possession of the one life which is communicated from the Divine source. "He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son hath not life." The evidence of union is manifestation of the new life in the new character. "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one." It was useless for the Church at Jerusalem to talk of unchurching the Gentiles, when they had received like precious faith, and were rejoicing in the fellowship of the new-found Lord and Saviour. Unity was wrought by the Cross of Christ; the redeemed are the Church. No section of the Church has any power to unchurch another. We may deny that the light falls upon our neighbour's garden, but he will only smile at our denials, while he stands within the radiance of the sunshine. The Church was not founded

upon any one ecclesiastical system. The bond of union is not external, it is not found in authority from without, compelling uniformity, but in faith and love, manifesting themselves in a new life. Wherever the Church is, there is the recognition of the one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The Church in the Apostolic age arose just as the scattered communities of Christians, who have recently been discovered in Russia, have arisen. Men brought into living relationship with the Lord through belief in Jesus Christ as their Saviour came into association with each other, impelled by the desire to express their faith in worship and social service. This seems to have been the natural order, individuals felt the power of the Gospel and responded to its invitation. They were, as the result, united to the Lord ; by the indwelling Spirit, believers in Christ recognised each other as brothers, and were drawn together and entered into covenant relation. This implied some organisation, but it seems to have been of the most elementary character, and always based upon the two-fold assumption of the lordship of Jesus Christ and the equality of all believers in spiritual matters. On the human side the Church is an attempt to embody an ideal, and to satisfy a need. It is not fixed, but ever in a state of flux. It has been developed and modified until in any ecclesiastical organisation there is but the faintest resemblance to the Church of the New Testament.

When the process of secularisation wrought such havoc in the Church at Corinth, the Apostle blames the erring ones most of all for seeming to depart from the unity of the body. The exhorta-

tions and the warnings are based on principles which suggest the unity of the whole fellowship of believers. The divisions in Corinth arose from a blind partisanship which revealed a misconception of the true bond of fellowship. There is no justification in the New Testament for sectarianism; it is a foreign element opposed to the solidarity of the Brotherhood, and dividing those who are one in heart, and therefore really one in fellowship. The Church's triumph in the early days is largely owing to her unity of faith and vitality of love. The little communities scattered over the world presented the same essential features, made the same confession. They were one in their unfaltering antagonism to evil, one in their loyalty to the lordship of the Saviour. In every place there was an open door for the believer who came from afar. He was not a stranger, a foreigner, but one in an international brotherhood. The household of faith, speaking many tongues, made one primary confession of belief in the Lord. The springs of unity are in the new life communicated from Christ to His followers. That life, wherever it is manifested, is the same, and produces the same fruits of the Spirit in every age and in all lands.

In the early Church the emphasis is not upon organisation, but fellowship. The local Churches were in the closest unity with those in the same area. Jewish converts in the Church at Jerusalem were united by the right hand of fellowship with the Gentile Churches. The existence of different forms of governmental organisation was not a barrier to unity. No Christian had any idea that he should deny his fellows because their

bishop was sent by one man instead of being sent by fifty men ; or that he should refuse fellowship because his brothers in another place had no bishop at all, but exercised that priesthood which was the right of all believers. Through the early years the charm of the Church was its living Fellowship. The terms " Church " and " Brotherhood " are used to describe one Fellowship in the earliest ecclesiastical canons. It is that which the modern Churches lack and will not gain until the true nature of Christian union is fully recognised.

Every reader of Church history is aware that different and conflicting theories of the Church have been read into the early records. These theories have sincere advocates, who fail to recognise any common platform upon which they could unite. But the point of view is being changed by the steady growth of historical criticism. The vision trained in historical reflection to realise its own imperfection will be quick to suspect that combatants who press their differences upon each other are at bottom battling for one and the same truth.

The assured results of modern investigation make it impossible to speak with the old dogmatic certainty about the constitution of the Apostolic Church. The time has passed when either side could speak of the other as blind schismatics denying the revealed truth of God. A frank admission of the facts would clear the air of controversy, and show much common ground. Such an admission was made by a great Anglican who has recently gone from us, and whose work in the domain of Church history is a lasting monument to patient, honest research. Bishop Stubbs says :

"On the one hand, there are those who would say that the external polity of the Church is of Divine institution in the sense that Christ is held not only to have founded a visible Church, but also to have given it a certain constitution, and certain definite forms of order and worship, intended to be of universal and eternal obligation. Of this visible organisation it is held that there are certain essential 'notes'—as for example, the Apostolic succession of bishops, or the sacredness of synodical action, by which a true Church is always to be distinguished.

"On the other hand, there are those who hold that while the cardinal doctrines of faith and the spirit of Christianity are to be accepted undoubtedly as of Divine institution, the external polity is a mere human ordinance, to be accounted for by broad historical causes; the gradual growth of the primitive Christian institutions being traceable from the first, and in many cases the actual origin of the various details of government and discipline found in the outward circumstances of the time.

"In my own opinion, the verdict both of New Testament interpretation and of historical criticism is on the side of those who hold this latter theory. For, briefly, if we are to prove that Jesus Christ or His apostles gave a settled and definite form of constitution to the Church, with a specified order of officers, and that such constitution was intended to be the model of all Christian societies for all time to come, it would be possible, one would think, to produce documents or recorded words purporting to found such a Church with such a settled constitution.

"But this, obviously, cannot be done. The comparative silence of the New Testament on Christian ritual and Church government contrasts markedly with the energy with which these institutions of later ecclesiastical history have been assailed and defended. Not only do the sacred writers not lay down any injunctions on such points as binding on all Christians in all ages, but they have not even left such a record of what they did institute as would have practically operated as an injunction.

"I am quite well aware, of course, that it is commonly argued that although there is no detailed account of the organisation of ecclesiastical polity in the New Testament, the existence of the Church with a clearly defined system of government, at the close, at any rate, of the third

century, is proof sufficient that such constitution must have been instituted by the Apostles according to a divinely revealed plan. But this argument is surely not reasonable. It is very much like saying that because the British political constitution has a certain form of polity to-day, that that form must necessarily have been in the minds of those who first laid the foundations of English liberty.

"The real truth is surely much more obvious. The constitution of the Church may certainly be traced to broad historical causes. From the first it is possible, to a very large extent, to trace the gradual growth of the primitive Christian institutes, and to point out, in many cases, the actual origin in the outward circumstances of the time of the various details of government and discipline which characterises them. We can all recognise this process in the origin of the diaconate, for example, as the result of a special emergency, the narrative of which is given in the Acts of the Apostles. And a similar process can, I believe, be traced in the history of other institutions and offices. I have, however, probably said sufficient for my immediate purpose, that of provoking thought and inquiry, and consequently study. I hope, at any rate, I have said sufficient to show how important it is, with a view to the charitable tolerance of one another's opinions."

VI

Church Systems in Modern Times

"If Christ were now in the world, which Church would be His? I shall not venture to say the United Presbyterian. We are not pure and broad enough to hold Him. But as little would I say any other. Because of our narrowness and contentions He would belong particularly to none of us, and will remain away till He can make a Church in some degree like Himself. Meantime, He belongs to all who welcome His spirit."—Dr. John Ker.

"All good men agree far more than they differ."

Old Proverb.

"Altar flowers are of many species, but all worship is one."

"To dismiss our divisions as mere quarrelsomeness and perversity is to be blind to the meaning of history and to lack faith in a guiding hand over human affairs."

Dr. John Oman.

VI

Church Systems in Modern Times

As soon as men begin to work out their ideals, they create division. Principles are expressed through parties; propaganda necessitates a plan of campaign. The spirit operates through system, the mind through a body. Force asserts itself through form. With the passing of the years, the parties, system, body and form are all compelled to adapt themselves to the changing conditions in the struggle for existence. The operation of this law applies to the Church and the Churches. The Church in its Divine element remains the same; its modes of expression, the Churches, must change—they belong to the sphere of things temporal.

In the progress of Christianity we may trace the force of many currents. There is ecclesiasticism, fed by clean and foul streams. At one period it is seen thundering along as a mighty torrent, ruthlessly sweeping all barriers aside. At another period, its movement is so slow that it appears stagnant and corrupt. We may see the point at which its different streams united, and again divided. Quite distinctly we may trace the river of the water of life, wandering on by the common road and across the fields, fertilising all lands, and speaking peace in its ripple of gladness as it

finds its way to the ocean of truth. Sometimes the river is apart from the stream of ecclesiasticism, taking a separate course in its freedom. The Church as a divine Brotherhood, and the Churches as human institutions, in which believers have sought to express their thoughts and do their work, are two distinct conceptions.

The Church is an organism with an organisation. As a living body, in which dwells the Divine Spirit, it is shaped and sustained by Divine power. As an organism, it is a Divine creation. As an organisation, it is purely human. Let us not deprecate the ecclesia which is the lamp containing the true light, the salt to purify and the lips through which the evangel is spoken. A Church is worthy of all honour so long as it is the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit, the body in which Christ dwells. When it ceases to be that, it brings no glory to God in its ministry, and is no more a Divine institution than a dead body is a living personality. Churches as organisations are built up by the wisdom of many generations. They are the most complex and varied of institutions; their branches differ so much that they are scarcely recognisable as belonging to the same tree. The test of organisation is its suitability for the purpose for which it is intended. Does it meet a need, or rather does it enable us to meet a need? For organisation of itself, whatever its history and claims, is as useless as a sword that is not grasped by a living hand or moved by any force. It is an easy mistake to suppose that organisation will of itself accomplish anything. It is an artificial arrangement, by which human energy can be adapted to certain ends. In a

sentence, it is a piece of machinery altogether dependent upon brain and hand.

The Holy Spirit was not given in the first century only, but in all times in which He was sought. There is a present-day inspiration, without which the "congregation of faithful men" will fail. The Church is an army, its principles unchanging, its tactics varying with the needs of the hour. The Church is a school; it must teach its scholars, beginning where they are, fitting them for the lives they have to live. Its continuity is in motive, not in method. Organisation, suitable and successful in one age, may fail hopelessly in another. A Church which has preserved the same broad outlines through centuries of faith, which can point to its existence as an old institution, in remote ages, when the State was in its cradle and civilisation in its infancy, which has seen the rise and fall of Empires; whose ancient buildings were the homes of devout souls, when England was a land of hostile hordes, makes an appeal of great power to the imagination. It commands our reverence. Any Church that has been a beacon light through the years to the mariners on life's stormy voyage, however antiquated it has become, has claims upon our gratitude, and a place in our love. No wise man lightly breaks with the traditions and usages of the past. They have grown sacred by long association, are consecrated by multitudes of hallowed memories, and strengthened by tender ties. He has little love for his own Church who fails to recognise the good there is in other communions.

The recognition of the human origin of all ecclesiastical systems does not confer the right

to cast aside their claims, any more than the knowledge that the wedding ceremony is a human institution gives liberty to disregard the sanctity of the marriage vows. The essential element is not the form, but the fact embedded in the form.

An earlier generation of denominationalists used to insist that the Church system was a divinely revealed order. They quoted proof texts, and insisted upon its acceptance in its entirety. One school declared that "Indepen-pendency" was clearly set forth in the New Testament, while another was equally sure that "Episcopal government" was the God-given form from which no departure could be permitted. Between these are modified systems in which the democratic and monarchical ideals are more or less combined. Each has been set forth as the one and only Scriptural system possessing the Divine sanction. Proof texts are quoted from which their principles were deduced or inferred.

Congregational Independency is said to rest upon two great Scriptural principles. The first is: "Every individual is independent of human authority in all matters pertaining to religious faith and practice." It was affirmed that this principle was vital and that there could be no true Christianity without it. The second principle regards the congregation or local association of believers, and is thus expressed: "Every congregation or local Church composed of Christians meeting in one place is independent internally and externally of all human authority in matters of religion." Rev. Joseph Fletcher, in his "History of Independency," says: "These principles form only a portion of Christianity as revealed from

heaven." There may be some comfort in the thought that Congregationalism is not the whole of the religion of Jesus Christ. Thus Independency is held to be not only necessary to the well-being, but to the very being of the true Church. All forms of ecclesiastical monarchy, with a human head, as the Roman Catholic Church, or the Protestant Church of England, were regarded as introducing an antagonistic element, and radically altering the nature of Christianity, inasmuch as they infringed the direct lordship of Christ in His Church, or impaired the equality of all believers in spiritual privilege.

It is impossible not to admire the splendid zeal with which men struggled and suffered for these ideals. In contending for ecclesiastical freedom, they laid the foundations of civil liberty. While we glory in the Fathers and their protest for individualism in Church systems, yet it is evident that the modern movement is not in the direction of the individualism they taught. The early Congregationalism was purely individualistic, and therefore divisive. The individual was the Church unit. In that glorious reaction to which we owe so much, the purpose of the Church was to minister to the interests of the individual. If the Church did not satisfy the man, he left, and started another more to his taste, so that there was real danger of each man constituting a denomination of his own. The individualism which was the strength of the earlier Congregationalism has almost passed away. To meet the changed conditions Independency has been so modified that it is very questionable whether its early advocates would recognise it, as practised in many of the

Churches whose ministers are still regarded as unyielding advocates of its Divine principles. He would be a bold man indeed who declared to-day that, after the long trial of Independency in England, it was the one and only true Church, or that in any sense it was an essential part of Christianity as revealed from heaven. In practice, if not in theory, Congregational Churches become more connexional, just as Connexionalism tends to become more congregational.

Dr. Dale, whose sound scholarship and fearless Christian consistency gave him a foremost place among Free Churchmen, says :

> " The New Testament does not contain any law declaring that a particular scheme of Church government is of universal and permanent obligation. In the directions which Christ gave for the treatment of an offending brother, He assumed the existence of a Christian assembly or Church, but nothing is said about the manner in which this assembly or Church is organised. In the Acts of the Apostles, and in Apostolic times, it is possible to discover the outlines of the organisation of the first Churches, but there is no precept by which this organisation is forced on the Churches of all countries and of all times."[1]

A certain presumption is created in favour of Congregational principles when it is shown that the polity of the Apostolic Churches is congregational, but the presumption falls far short of a proof that the Congregational polity is of permanent, Divine authority. That the Apostolic Churches were congregational does not even amount to a proof that Congregationalism is permanently expedient. Between a form of Church government and those great truths concerning Christ and the Christian

[1] *Congregational Principles*, Dr. Dale.

redemption which form the chief part of the substance of the New Testament, there is an obvious difference. What is true once and for ever is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He died for remission of sins, that He rose from the dead and received all authority in heaven and on earth. That must have been just as true in the second century as in the first, and in the third as in the second, but a form of Church government which was the best possible organisation for the Church of the first century may perhaps have been the worst possible organisation for the Church of the third. This is the position of the younger representatives of all the Free Churches.

Non-ecclesiastical Christianity has been described rather than defined by nicknames given in the heat of controversy. Even the honoured terms Dissenter, and Nonconformist, can only be accepted as very partial representations of the negative aspect of the Free Churches, in relation to the Established Church of England. Nonconformity, with all its exaggerated individualism, is an affirmation of the principle that life is more than raiment, that the primary and vital consideration in religion is the spirit rather than the system. The Nonconformist spirit begins, not with the construction of an organisation which, on theoretical or argumentative considerations, is held to be the one necessary for the production of life, but further down and further back. Whatever organisation comes into existence must be the already existing life weaving for itself an outward and visible dress; it must be the natural and automatic producing, by the existing life, of a system which that existing life finds necessary

and helpful for its own health, and which, precisely because it is thus produced by life, becomes, one must not say the producer, but the deepener and intensifier of life in its turn. The whole process must be life, that of a primary life germ fashioning, for itself, its own members and its own physical frame, which once fashioned, are to react upon and help in maintaining the life out of which they came.[1] The Free Churchman regards all questions of Church organisation as of secondary consideration; the life is the supreme thing, the dress must not be allowed to dwarf or hamper its expression. The struggles of Nonconformity in its hostility and revolt have been attempts to gain freedom for the growth of the soul; had the Established Church been sufficiently elastic in her organisation to allow expansion, the early reformers would have remained inside, instead of going out to find freedom.

A Manual of Instruction for members of the Anglican Church, which is largely used by the dominant party in the Establishment, thus sets forth their claim to hold a monopoly of rights of valid Churchmanship in England:

"At present the Eastern, the Roman, and the Anglican portions of the Church make up the Catholic body—the universal Church. The Church is to be regarded as the Divinely ordained organ and keeper of doctrine, and the means of grace, and as standing or falling by the Apostolic succession, and as this can only be found in the three great Churches, whose continuity has never been interrupted, the Western, Eastern and English, these three, together make up the true Universal Church. The body of the Church, one in origin, has in the course of time, through the sin of man, by Divine permission, become divided into

[1] See *History of English Nonconformity*, p. 95. H. W. Clark.

three great branches, outwardly separated, but inwardly united, which, when the right time is come, will grow together again into one tree, overshadowing the world with its foliage. No one of these communions forms the whole Church, but is only a part. If a mirror is broken into three pieces, the largest of these, having had its edges cut straight, and separately framed, this newly framed portion would have a unity of its own, but not the unity of the original mirror; it would represent such a unity as is exhibited by the Roman Catholic Church at the present time.

"Each of the three portions of the Church possesses the creeds, the order of Bishops, apostolically consecrated, and with the Bishops, the sacraments of grace, by which members of the Church are united to Christ, the centre of unity. Though outwardly separated, the Church is inwardly one, the body of Christ indwelt by the Holy Ghost, the life-giver. These divisions, of which we have been speaking, are exceedingly sad, as being contrary to the mind of our Blessed Lord, expressed in His great Eucharistic intercession, the night before He died. They are sad as hindering the spread of the Gospel, and the conversion of the world to Christ. They are sad as a ground of perpetual reproach. It is our duty to possess a spirit desirous of reunion, and to keep up such a spirit by earnest prayer, and in all ways of speech and feeling, as ever ready for reunion when the path shall be opened to us."[1]

This is the attitude taken up by a general of the company of Jesus, who is alleged to have said of the Jesuits, *Sint ut sunt, aut non sint* (let them be as they are, or let them not be at all). The position has the strength of simplicity, but it is impossible. It is a defiance of history, and an invitation to return to the old sectarianism born of an assumed infallibility. The claim of immutability for any Church system becomes more impossible as it is seen that Churches, like all human organisations, are growths, governed by evolution.

[1] *The Catholic Religion*, p. 64.

The essentials of Church unity in the view of these advocates are the possession of the Apostolic succession, the divinely appointed sacraments, the creeds and the moral order. These they claim to hold in joint trust with the Roman Catholic and the Eastern portions of the Church. It is common knowledge that neither of these Churches admit any such claim. The tragedy of all great spiritual movements lies in the desire to maintain their position, not by cherishing their original spirit, but by organising them into systems. The Roman Catholic Church holds that the Church of England broke away from Catholic unity and cannot be recognised until it returns to the submission of the Pope. Cardinal Vaughan, in a famous speech at Bristol, expressed the Catholic position with a clearness which leaves no room for questions. He said :

"It is best to be perfectly frank and definite. The kernel of the question of the reunion of Christendom consists in the admission of the Roman claim that the Pope has received by Divine right authority to teach and govern the whole Church. . . It is not a question of examining and accepting a long list of Catholic doctrines. It is simply a question of the fundamental and essential constitution of the Church. Did the Divine Founder give His Church a visible head upon earth with power to teach, define, settle controversies, and govern? I fail to see the use of discussing any other subject. Settle this matter, and everything falls into its proper place and becomes easy. Reject this, and there is no basis on which reunion is possible, even though men were prepared to affix their signatures to every other doctrine taught in the creed of Pope Pius IV."

Most emphatically the Roman Church excommunicates the Church of England, and denies point by point her claim to be part of the Catholic

body. The Greek Church denies the right of both Roman and English Churches to a place in the Catholic community. She has excommunicated the Roman Church and repudiates the validity of her ministers. It is a curious position; these Churches each claim catholicity and proceed to establish their claim by excommunicating the others. Their dilemma is that the more they succeed by this method, the less Catholic they become. Each item in these rival claims, which is not manifestly untrue to history, is highly speculative and open to the gravest objections.

Bishop Gore says: "Where the Apostolic organisation abides"—and he seems to deny that it abides outside the Church of which he is a distinguished representative—"there is the covenanted fulness of the gift of the Spirit." The fulness of the gift of the Spirit can only be known by the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." The Apostle also adds, "Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another." Can any one of the Churches claim to be the Church of all saints, that can deny the gift of the Spirit to other communions bearing the Christian name? Which can show any monopoly of missionary fervour? Are the names of the heralds of the Gospel, and the martyrs, all upon one Church roll? Which alone proclaimed the glad tidings to the masses in darkest England? Which alone has been swift to respond to the needs of the poor, brave to speak for the oppressed, and valiant in the crusades against the drink traffic? Which stood alone

against social injustice, hers the only voice that pleaded for the rights of the victims of the sweater, and the inhabitants of the slums? Which has been the solitary witness to the truth of God unencumbered by tradition and unsullied by superstition, whose representatives were the only ministers of comfort, lingering by the beds of pain, and seeking to win back the fallen to the Christ? These questions have their answer written in the history of every denomination in this country. We rejoice in Christian work in all the Churches. Any theory that compels its advocates to deny the presence of the gift of the Spirit in other Churches, in order to prove its possession by the community to which they belong, must be in sore straits. The Church of England has played a great and noble part in the history of British Christianity, and is to-day entitled to the honour and love of all good men. Her clergy have in their ranks saints and scholars, reformers and evangelists, for whose worth and work all may give thanks to God, but no Church can make good any claim to a monopoly of the gift of the Spirit.

It is less difficult to trace the rise and fall of Churches as historic knowledge advances. We do not see that Jesus, who warned His disciples against the lust of power, and the exercise of lordship over each other, ever founded any ecclesiastical organisation. It is not shown that the Apostle to the Gentiles, who insisted so strenuously upon individual freedom, was the maker of a Church polity as rigid as the Jewish system which he repudiated with scorn. It is shown that Churches, as institutions, came into existence to meet a need and express a truth, that they are

not now what they were at the commencement of their history, and that no one of them is the exact counterpart of any organisation recorded in the Scriptures. It is shown that the attempt to restrict religious life to uniformity of expression has deluged the earth with the blood of the saints, and that it had its origin, not in the Christian religion, but in the political necessities of the Roman Empire. St. Bernard boldly said to Pope Eugenius IV., "In your power, you are the successor, not of Peter, but of Constantine." The root of the whole matter lay there. The power claimed by the Roman ecclesiastical authorities came to them not from their Master, but from the world, upon whose models their institutions too often were fashioned. The darkest crimes in the history of the Churches have been perpetrated in support of their ecclesiastical systems.

It may be clearly shown that movements which came into existence to express the Christian life with greater freedom than was permitted in the Churches have become stereotyped in ecclesiastical systems which have developed into active agencies in persecution. The order of degeneration seems to be thus : the Divine Spirit fires some souls with new life, to express that life men leave the old Institutions, they then create an Institution of their own, and in after years, to maintain its assumed monopoly, or authority, the representatives of the Institution repeat the evil mistakes of their predecessors. This is strikingly illustrated in the history of the Dominican Order. Founded in the thirteenth century, it was a splendid attempt to escape from the fetters of an

outward system of repression. The spontaneous life of goodness was unrestricted, the spirit was beautiful. St. Dominic sought for himself and his brothers a simple rule which they sanctified by holy living. Their Order was a denial of the materialism of their time and a brave assertion of spirituality, but the Divine Fire burned out, and the Order of St. Dominic became the organ of the Inquisition. The same evil fate overtook the movement which Luther founded. We remember how bravely he contended for individual freedom and strenuously undertook the work of ecclesiastical reconstruction.

"Heresy," he said, "can never be kept back by force. Another grip is wanted, another quarrel and conflict than that of the sword. God's word must contend. If that avails nothing, temporal power can never settle the matter, though it fill the world with blood. Heresy is a spiritual thing, which no iron can hew down, no fire burn, no water drown."

But when Lutherism was the ruling power in the State, the Reformer, great as he was, manifested anxiety, even to the justification of persecution, to prevent heretics having freedom. He urged the authorities to repress the new movement by the death of its advocates. "Let there be no pity," he cried. "It is a time of wrath, not of mercy. He who dies fighting for authority is a martyr before God."

When a Church insisted that its system was the one and only depository of Divine truth it became intolerant, and as occasion offered, used the secular arm to crush out of existence the smaller communities. Through the centuries men have fought for Church systems with splendid, though

mistaken, enthusiasm. They have regarded their organisation as the ark of the covenant, which must be defended at any cost, for in it alone could salvation and safety be secured. All honour to their memory. They were honest in their quest for truth, and not entirely mistaken. They found a part, which they mistook for the whole. The conceptions of the age in which they lived shaped their thoughts more largely than they knew. The Imperialism of Rome and the Individualism of the English Commonwealth provided the mould in which their systems took form.

It should be noted that theories of Church government do not appear until the system is called upon to justify its separate existence. The champions of the sects were not enquirers seeking Truth that they might bring into existence a new organisation which would correspond to the pattern they found. They were the representatives of an established order, which they sought to vindicate by an appeal to both Scripture and tradition. Their mental attitude must have been unconsciously partisan and prejudiced. Their success in defining and solidifying their Church organisation has become a crushing burden to their successors.

A writer upon the history of chemistry thus describes the scientists of other days. The description has its lesson for those who specialise in Church defence :

"Most of the earlier seekers after a knowledge of nature began by building walls, each of which marked off one portion of natural occurrences from the rest. I do not suppose that they built these walls consciously, rather they thought they saw walls where no barriers were

The alchemists were very busy within their intellectual sheep-folds, as the chemists of to-day are most active in the larger walled gardens of their intellectual dominion, but the alchemists made fewer breaches in their encircling barriers than we make now in ours, and I think we recognise what our predecessors could not acknowledge—that the territorial divisions which must be established are of our own making."[1]

Church history may not unfairly be described as a record of the erection and the taking down of cleverly constructed artificial barriers. The genius for wall-building is common among ecclesiastics.

The claim to exclusiveness makes it necessary to show that other Churches are not and have not been the means through which salvation and Christian character have come to the world, that in them the blessings of the Holy Spirit are not enjoyed, and the fruits of the Spirit are not found. There is a practical test which may be applied to any Church. " By their fruits ye shall know them." The long process of division and sub-division would be nothing more than a tedious comedy, if the results were not so pathetic. The Churches are literally destroying the Church. If we are not reduced to the desperate position of defending our own little vested interests, can we not admit the plain facts, which seem to be beyond the region of discussion, that all Churches, by their history, are shown to be imperfect and changing, and that the Divine life producing holy activities is the glory of each and all ?

There can be no Apostolic succession worth discussing, apart from the Apostolic spirit, and

[1] *Story of the Chemical Elements*, p. 15.

that is claimed by all Christian communities. The Salvation Army captain, preaching at the street corner, may be as genuine a successor of Peter the fisherman as is the Pope of Rome. By magnifying the local and accidental features of the Church we create division. Organisations are means to an end. They are to continue Christ's work in the world. Their only justification is that through them, blessing comes to the people. One Church can only become hostile to another in its sectional and sectarian elements. In the essential realities they are all one. God takes large compass to bring about His works. Any notion that the Church is necessarily here rather than there, that it is signified by the presence of bishop or of presbyter, that the form, whatever it be, is before the spirit, is outside the sphere of the New Testament.

The Bishop of Durham says:

"A man may be an Episcopalian, by the maturest results of thought and enquiry, and may consistently wish to see a genuine though not exaggerated episcopacy universal, yet he will heartily recognise and honour the position of his Presbyterian or Independent or Baptist or Methodist brethren. He will prize the Divine blessings of sacraments and pray that they may be everywhere revered and used, and yet will see in the saintly Friend a true member of the Eternal Head, and so of the true Body."

Recognising the Christ-like in others does not make us less loyal to the community to which we belong. In a far larger and truer sense than Dr. Pusey intended, we may read his words:

"Divisions in the body are of the nature of serious wounds rather than amputation of limbs. They are as deep fissures or cracks upon the surface of the earth, which do not separate the earth into two or more worlds. We may regard the divisions in the Church under the figure of a

serious quarrel among brothers, by which the natural bond of a common parentage is not broken. Brothers may be disunited, but they remain brothers still. Unknown in face, in place separate, different in language, opposed, alas! in some things to one another, still before the throne of God they are one Holy Catholic Apostolic Church."

The recognition that Church systems are human attempts to build according to the Divine principles may not lead to a general amalgamation and the creation of a new sect, but it would bring us together by the practical realisation by all the Churches that each is a part of a greater whole, that one supplements another, that in the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem which is coming down from heaven, there will not be uniformity of architecture as in the deadly dull streets of modern times, but that the separate buildings erected upon different plans working out varied designs are all the dwelling-places of the children of God, and in this find their harmony.

There are three recognised ways of explaining the unity and historic continuity of the Church. One of these, maintained by Romanists, is that the Church is identified with the clergy, and finds its unity in the perpetuation of its orders, and of the organisation of which the priesthood is the necessary factor. It finds its justification in identifying itself with an external and officially organised Church institution. It maintains a monopoly of spiritual power, and declares that it is an organised body, as visible and palpable as the Roman people, the Republic of Venice, or the Kingdom of France. The logical advocates of that theory are in the Church of Rome. Another finds the unity and continuity of the Church in the continued existence of Christendom as manifested by national con-

fessions and realised in the Christian consciousness, expressed by various communions and Church organisations. This is accepted as the Broad theory. There is another way of explaining the unity of the Church. It is that which regards the Catholic Church as identified with Christ's body of true believers, wherever they may be, in different organisations, bearing different names and outside all ecclesiastical systems, but yet bound together, because united to Jesus Christ, their supreme Head. This view is generally held by Free Churchmen and by Evangelical teachers in the Church of England. It would seem simpler to affirm that all who in their lives show Christ-likeness are inspired by the one Spirit, and bound together by the bond of life. It may be a long time before the Churches give up their strife over the theory of the Church. The old call of one Church to another was "Return and submit to me." A new call is heard, "Let us go forward together and conquer." Uniformity of organisation is not even desired by the majority of Free Churchmen. It is very questionable whether, if it could be secured to-morrow, it would be of any practical value to the cause of Christ. What we rather need is a new spirit or the return to the old spirit, which found its inspiration in communion with the Christ and manifested itself in love toward the brethren. This is a time of war with evil. England may be at the parting of the ways. If we lose now, a hundred years may pass before another opportunity comes to the Churches for uniting in practical work, and turning back the Paganism which in a new dress confronts us.

VII

The Unity of the Church

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."—St. John xvii. 20-23.

VII

The Unity of the Church

Our unhappy divisions come into greater prominence as the trend of thought merges from the old individualism in the direction of fellowship and co-operation. Recent movements have recalled many to the vision of union. The interesting Colonial suggestions in the direction of re-union, such as the merging of the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches of Australia in one Body, and the proposals of federation of ecclesiastical organisations in the mission field, are all signs of dissatisfaction with the spectacle of the broken Body and the desire for a united Ecclesia. The Dean of Westminster, in a charming little book, "The Vision of Unity," declares that he looks for the time when Free Churches and State Churches will unite. He recognises the difficulties and the dangers of division, especially to the Anglican Church. He says :

> "The scope and destiny of the Anglican Communion are here at stake, as a minority among English-speaking Christians may indeed maintain a glorious tradition and preserve an influential type of spiritual life and activity, but its full natural growth and the proper exercise of its ideal function are not possible without the recovery of those who have been alienated from it in the past."

There was a time when it was a glorious thing to be strongly individualistic in religion. It

meant something. It was the position of opposition to some denial of human liberty or some mis-statement of Divine truth; but now, the old separations have, in not a few instances, lost their meaning. It would be extremely difficult for the representatives of some isolated parts of the divided Church to make an intelligent defence of their position in the light of present knowledge. Some controversies have been buried and forgotten. They are not now separating lines between Christian people. Only students are sufficiently interested to look them up in an Encyclopædia; but the divisions perpetuated in stone remain with all their weakness and some of the rancour of the long ago.

Our divisions, bad as they are, are perhaps more on the surface than in the depths. Little minds are most impressed by discords. All Christians are wonderfully alike when their labels are removed. When once we get back to the heart of Christ's message, our diversities fall away, and all good men find themselves at one.

Is it still possible to speak of the Church as the Vine and its branches constituting a living unity; the one body in which the several limbs are in vital union, or must it be described as a multitude of units? It is necessary to define in one's own mind the conception of Christian union and the things which are essential to its realisation. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews depicts the general assembly and church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, the believers on earth and the spirits of just men made perfect.[1] This is the Church of all saints and angels,

[1] HEB. xii. 23.

invisible and indivisible, the unity of which never has been and never can be broken ; it is one in virtue of relation to the Mediator of the new covenant. But what of the visible Church ? Can it be regarded as anything more than a federation of independent and separate bodies, and does that really represent the New Testament teaching of the one body ? Time has hardened and multiplied the differences among the communities into which the Church has been divided. Wherein consists the " Fellowship of Souls " maintaining the unity of the Spirit ? Amid all the seeming contradictions can there be seen any glimpse of " that holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,"[1] or is vision not yet ?

Professor W. E. Collins points out that so far as it lies in the power of men, the unity of the Church may be rent in three several ways : by heresy, by schism, or by making impossible terms of communion. If this is admitted, then it is difficult to free any of the great denominations from the guilt of rending the unity of the Church. All need to repent and to seek to repair the breach.

Without allocating blame, Free Churchmen may claim at least, that their break with Anglicanism was not less justifiable than the severance of the Anglican Church from Rome. In reference to heresy, who is to be the judge ? It can be shown that all the varieties of doctrine taught in Nonconformist pulpits are voiced in the Established Church. Are they heresy outside

[1] REV. xxi. 2.

and orthodoxy inside? It would seem that neither party is competent to sit in judgment upon the other and no useful purpose is served by making the attempt.

Those who claim that the unity of the Church consists in possessing a centralised unitary system of government, transmitted from the Apostles, seem to ignore the plain fact that such unity only extends so far as that organisation extends, and it does not cover the whole Church. Of course a part may claim to be the whole, but the claim cannot be sustained; the Catholic Church must be larger than any denomination. The claim does not make for union. It only fosters strife and separation. It has been made in the strongest form by the Roman Communion, and there has been no hesitation in excommunicating those who could not admit it, with the result of repeated divisions. It would only secure uniformity of machinery, something imposed from without, the tyranny of a type, not the free agreement which springs from the possession of a common life witnessing to the reality of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

We must refrain from the irritating habit of calling names. It may be easy to make a point by describing Free Churchmen as "schismatics," but it only results in creating bitter feeling and may also indicate some confusion of thought. Schism is the act of separation from the Church, cutting oneself off from the body of Christ's people. Nonconformists are no more guilty of that sin than Anglicans; indeed the very argument used by the High Churchman to prove his Dissenting brother a schismatic recoils upon himself. In

common they were represented in the one Church that contained practically all Christians till the Reformation. They are alike heirs of the great Catholic tradition with its splendour and its shame; their roots are in the past; they did not cut themselves off from the vine ; they are branches of later growth. For different reasons they did separate themselves from systems which they held to be perversions or an accretion and foreign to Catholic Christianity. Historically they may both plead justification. Their avowed intention was to restore the lost purity of doctrine and practice, not to set up a brand-new Church of their own creation, but to get back to the original Church of the Scriptures. Their Nonconformity was a sincere attempt to secure more rigid conformity to the teaching and sacraments of the early Church. They believed the Roman Church had introduced ceremonies and doctrines which were a departure from the faith once for all delivered to the Saints, and to maintain the Catholic Apostolic continuity they were compelled to open other channels through which might flow the river that had its springs beneath the Eternal throne. They assert their claim to churchmanship in the larger and truer meaning of the term. In cutting themselves free from the ceremonial and the theology Rome had developed, they did not separate from the spiritual and historic union of Christendom. It may be necessary to distinguish between what is ceremonially historic and what is fundamentally historic.

It is well to remind ourselves that external, visible unity is not required for the essential unity of the Church. The promise of the Lord does not

reach to the outward fold at any time. "Other sheep" He said, "I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must lead, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall become one flock, one shepherd"—one flock, in however many folds it be gathered, because it listens to the voice of the one Shepherd. Bishop Westcott, to whom ministers owe so much, says:

"It is necessary to bear two things in mind in treating of the unity of the Church. One, unity of the whole is consistent with a wide variety of parts, each having, to a certain degree, unity in itself, and yet, the essential bond of union is not external but spiritual. It consists in a common principle of life. Its expression lies not in any outward system."

We may hope and pray that in the future there may again be one Holy Catholic Church, visibly united in organisation. What the form of that Church will be no man can tell. It does not seem likely that any one of the Churches will succeed in imposing its organisation upon the others. It may be a new order combining all that is best in each and providing freedom, while maintaining authority. That is the ideal, but it is not yet in view. Are we still to stand apart while it is growing or shall we manifest our present union in common service?

It may be that too high a value has been set upon uniformity. If we could obtain mechanical unity of organisation, would it be worth while? We should gain in verbal consistency; we should present an unbroken uniformity in the worship offered by the Church. What else would there be? We should lose in many directions. There

is a wholesome emulation and a stirring to greater effort.

J. R. Green bears witness to the value of the Methodist movement to the State Church. He says :

"The Methodists themselves were the least result of the Methodist revival. Its action upon the Church broke the lethargy of the clergy, and the 'Evangelical' movement, which found representatives like Newton and Cecil within the pale of the Establishment, made the fox-hunting parson and the absentee rector at last impossible. In Walpole's day the English clergy were the idlest and most lifeless in the world. In our own time no body of religious ministers surpasses them in piety, in philanthropic energy, or in popular regard. In the nation at large appeared a new moral enthusiasm which, rigid and pedantic as it often seemed, was still healthy in its social tone, and whose power was seen in the disappearance of the profligacy which had disgraced the upper classes, and the foulness which had infested literature, ever since the Restoration. But the noblest result of the religious revival was the steady attempt which has never ceased from that day to this to remedy the guilt, the ignorance, the physical suffering, the social degradation of the profligate and the poor. It was not till the Wesleyan movement had done its work that the philanthropic movement began."

Can it be questioned that the progress of the Free Churches has reacted upon the Established Church for good ? Does not the Church Army, with its splendid ministry to the bottom dog, owe its inception and much of its success to the Salvation Army ?

Beyond the question of the desirability of uniformity of organisation there is the necessary inquiry : is it possible to secure any such union ? Does any practical man suppose that the twenty-one million Free Churchmen will ever regard their

history as a series of blunders and their origin as a sin ? Why should we seek to mould the life of the Church to one pattern ? This is not God's way in nature. There is unity of life, but not uniformity. May not this suggest that in seeking by an iron rule, or an elaborate creed, to bring Christians into one ecclesiastical system, recognising one human head and a uniformity of government, we are following a will-o'-the-wisp ? It is curious to observe that the Free Churchman, as he becomes more stereotyped, does not give a hearty welcome to denominationally unrecognised forms of ministry. He becomes an ecclesiastic. The Churchman offers recognition to those outside, on condition that they surrender and accept the historic episcopate and all that it means. The Roman Church looks down upon the Anglican Church and talks to her ministers in almost the same language the Anglican uses towards the Nonconformists. We are all afraid of the free spirit. Very little headway has been made towards union along these lines. It is recorded of the Emperor, Charles V., that he was determined to make Spain, the Low Countries and Germany, an example to all Christendom, of uniformity in matters of faith. He bequeathed his policy to Spain, it resulted in the Thirty Years' War, and of the final defeat and decadence of that country. By the Inquisition, by torture and imprisonment, the Emperor tried to carry out his plan, but it was hopeless. In after life, broken down by failure and disappointment, he resigned his crown and retired to the Monastery of St. Just, and there amused himself by constructing and repairing clocks, which he found

himself unable to regulate so that they would keep exactly alike for any length of time. The lesson is obvious. Ought we not to look for unity in other directions? Robertson has well said that the real union of the human race lies in oneness of heart.

Our Lord's prayer for unity among His disciples may give us the key to our problem. Jesus said:

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they may all be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me, and the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them that they may be one even as we are one: I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me."

Is the prayer of our Divine Lord still unanswered? Do we think that for nearly two thousand years the request Jesus made to the Father has been denied? Surely not. What if we have been seeking in the wrong direction, while all the time the vital unity that really matters has been existing, not in the Church, but in Christian experience? In what sense can we think of unity between the Lord our Redeemer and God the Father? Was it the unity of a common life? God was in Christ. Without raising controversy, we are agreed that the Lord Jesus was in a special sense the manifestation of God, so that He could say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Was it unity in the manifestation of a common love? The love of God flowed through the man Christ Jesus. He who would know that God is

love may find assurance in the life of our blessed Lord upon the earth. Was it unity in common service? The Father has ever worked for His children's good. He gave His only begotten Son. It is also true that Jesus laid down His life of Himself. He was master of His own fate. His love constrained Him to the service of the Cross, through which redemption was made possible. How else can be expressed the vital unity between Christ and God? The prayer of our Lord for unity has its answer in the possession of a common life. Members of His Church are those who are in the one Body, who are called in one hope, who have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. It may be said that the unity of the Christian Church is at first the oneness of an ideal reality, and is not confined within the bounds of space and time.[1] It may be present in many places at the same time, and in such a way that, as Ignatius says, "Where Jesus Christ is, there is the whole Church." The congregation at Corinth was, in the eyes of St. Paul, the body of Christ, or the whole Church in its all-embracing unity, not a body, for there is but one body of Christ, not part of the body of Christ, for Christ is not divided, but the body of Christ in its unity, and filled with the fulness of His power. Where there is the common life, the life of God, there believers have received the right to be called the sons of God; there is the body, the Christian society, there are the gifts which enable the Church to perform its Divine functions; and all the

[1] *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, by Dr. Lindsey.

spiritual actions of the tiniest community, such as the Church in the house of Nymphas—prayer, praise, preaching, baptism, the Holy Supper—are actions of the whole Church. It is a perfect organism in the sense that there is no necessary part lacking that is required for the purpose the organism is intended to serve, for its support, or increase, or for its work. The life which pervades the organisation in its totality is in the minutest part. That life is Christ. If all Christians possess the Divine life, then to that extent they are members of the one fellowship, brothers in the same family. They are a unity amid all their diversity.

Jesus said, " This is the commandment that is Mine—that ye love one another." The disciples were to be known by their love. Love to Christ made love to each other possible. The slave and his master meeting together in the common fellowship of the Church and partaking of the social meal which afterwards became the Supper, felt a new thrill as they regarded each other. Love to the Lord created love among His followers. Our love of institutions almost obscures love for individuals. To our shame be it said that we have found strange ways of manifesting our regard for each other. And yet, beneath it all, there is that in the Christian heart which responds to that in the heart of every other believer. There is a common note ; the world knows it, and we know it. The real universality of the Church is shown in this affection, which does exist, however much men may attempt to keep it within sectarian channels. When we see the Christian life lived, our love goes out to the disciple, whatever his name or place.

Christian Union in Social Service

If the Father and our Lord are one in rendering common service, may not we find our unity in the same holy Fellowship? To follow the Master is to become a servant. It is only as we serve that we really see. We may not render the same kind of service, but if it comes from the one holy motive, it is the manifestation of our unity. We are believers in the one body, recognising Jesus Christ as the one Saviour, strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Let us seek our unity in the things that really count. We may not, for the sake of an external uniformity, sacrifice the real elements of union. If our common life and love and service can find fitter expression and more effective operation, then let us, in the spirit of our Master, follow the light. It is open to each man to do much to break down the old barriers of suspicion and isolation and Christless bigotry. While we are in different camps, and following different banners, let us ever remember that we belong to the same army, and all bow before the Royal Standard. In our differences, let us manifest the unity of charity and in our controversies, let us seek to be scrupulously just towards each other. Why should not the Churches manifest their union and co-operate in social service?

The clergy of the Anglican communion are in a position to initiate co-operation. They could call the ministers of the neighbourhood together for prayer and conference and, without seeking to disguise the points upon which they disagree, seek to carry out some of the purposes for which all are striving. Our work waits, the Churches are rendering the Church powerless. There need not be any surrender of principle, or violation of the

tenderest scruple of conscience, when Christians come together as brothers, seeking to do the will of the Lord in making life brighter and holier, and bringing in His wayward children that He may say to us at the last "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The times are favourable to the expression of common union in service for the common good. There is a better understanding among Christians, a greater willingness to recognise each other's worth to the community. Already there is co-operation in scholarship in translating the Scriptures, and almost every town provides some illustrations of all Churches joining in ministering to the suffering and the poor. The extension of this co-operation is the first step towards creating closer ties of Brotherhood. The first question is not what each Church can *concede*, but what each can *contribute* to the good of the whole. It may well be argued that each Church has given something to the enrichment of the Christian conception of life and the development of saintly character, without which all the Churches would have been poorer. There need be no useless discussion as to which Church will absorb the others. It is difficult to conceive any one of them as the only representative of Christ. There is no plea for a neutral undenominationalism from which all that is distinctive of any denomination has been eliminated. The plea is for an attempt to seek union not in words, but in works. Are we sure that it is necessary or wise to force our doubtful disputations to the foremost place whenever the question of Christian fellowship in social service is raised ?

The Churches have long tried the experiment of putting questions of governmental polity first, and the results are seen in the chaos of Western Christianity. The Churches have tried the experiment of insisting upon unity of doctrinal confessions, spending their intellectual powers in formulating and defending definitions of belief which have caused endless divisions among the friends of Jesus. Is it not time to return to the early conditions of fellowship, and to put love first, in the spirit of the greatest Commandment? That would not end the divisions at once, but it would enable all the Churches to unite their forces in the common works in which all Christians should engage. If it is urged that such a union is impossible, or that the time is not yet ripe for its inauguration, it may be recalled that in several directions it is already in operation. There is the notable example of the Christian Student Movement, in which over two thousand Universities and Colleges in different countries are represented, with a membership of over 135,000 men and women, pledged to prayer and Christian service. The differences of theological opinion and ecclesiastical order have not prevented real union in devotion and in work. These students are not disloyal to their particular Churches because they have found common ground upon which they can stand with members of other Churches. They have discovered a wider outlook, a deeper sympathy, and greater opportunities than they knew before.

What is it that makes the realisation of union impossible? Is it anything more than prejudice, or vested interests, or personal pride? Does

the loud cry for loyalty to truth mean loyalty to our interpretation of truth? Can we be so sure that there is no truth in the other interpretations? What if all the Churches have some truth which the world needs? We can be sure that the time has come for all who bear the Christ's name to manifest the Christian spirit and "try His works to do."

VIII

Attempts to Secure Christian Union

"O Almighty God, who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit and doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."—ANCIENT COLLECT.

"As very frequently happens in the history of ideas, our terminology is a survival of conditions no longer existing, and our mental conceptions follow at the tail of our vocabulary."—NORMAN ANGELL.

VIII

Attempts to Secure Christian Union

THE dream of Christian reunion is as old as the divisions in the Church. The prayer of our Lord that the disciples might be one (JOHN xvii.) suggests that Jesus foresaw that the enemy of souls would seek to divide those whom God had joined together in holy fellowship. There have always been clear-visioned men who, seeing what a united Church might do, have been impatient with the Churches and their endless divisions. Attempts to secure the unity of the Christian Church have taken the direction of coercion or comprehension. When the former became impossible by the refusal of the civil power, then the latter became a question for serious consideration.

When the Church in the Roman Empire became a great ecclesiastical organisation by alliance with the State, she ceased to win her way by suffering, and adopted the methods of the civil government to gain her conquests. In defiance of the teaching of the Lord she insisted upon obedience by the most diabolical penalties. The teaching of the Fathers justifying persecution did not materially differ from that enunciated by Plato :

"Let this be the law," he wrote, "No one shall possess shrines of the gods in private houses, and he who is found to possess them and perform any sacred rites not publicly

authorised, shall be informed against to the guardians of the law, and let them issue orders that he shall carry his private rites to the public temples, and if he do not obey, let them inflict a penalty until he comply. And if a person be proven guilty of impiety, not merely from childish levity, but such as grown-up men may be guilty of, let him be punished with death."[1]

Once the Church had made the fatal assumption that the clergy had exclusive Divine authority to bestow saving grace, the rest was easy and logically consistent. She had the right to preserve the community from those whom she could only regard as victims of dangerous delusions, or wicked rebels against Divine authority.

The desperate efforts to secure and maintain uniformity of organisation and identity of creeds have filled the world with amazement and horror. These means have had a long trial and have resulted in oft-repeated failure.

Coercion by the civil power was tried for many years. The terrible tale of persecution is written in blood, but it belongs to the past. It is discredited everywhere. However sincere its advocates may have been they were horribly misguided and defeated their own ends. Persecution in the name of religion is born of unbelief, and produces infidelity. It is difficult to maintain a tolerant spirit towards those who insist with Bellarmin that " the Church is an organised social body as visible and palpable as the Roman people, the Republic of Venice, or the Kingdom of France. It is entered by external rites and *maintained by compulsion.*" That compulsion has reddened the streets with blood and lit up the darkness by the fires of martyrdom. The theory is logical enough,

[1] *Laws*, 908-10.

but it is entirely foreign to the spirit of Christ. It is utterly discredited and has covered its advocates with lasting shame. It is not likely to be attempted again by any Church. Yet one must remember the truth of Bishop Creighton's warning that though persecution, as expressed in legal penalties, may be a thing of the past, the temper which produced it may still survive in altered forms. The desire to have one's own way, because it is one's own, may still wear the appearance of zeal for the common good, or care for the purity of an institution. Penalties may still be inflicted after trial with closed doors. Discussion may be prematurely checked by means as efficacious as the threat of the faggots and the stake. In surveying the mistakes of the past, it is well to remember that their causes are not removed. As a practical consideration union by coercion will never again be seriously entertained by any Church.

The failure to secure uniformity by compulsion was because "all religious systems which refuse to respect human freedom are in the end found to be a fighting against Nature, and therefore a fighting against God." Religion cannot long endure the close confinement of State enactments. The new wine of experience bursts the old bottles of legality. Legislation may regulate behaviour, but not belief.

It is forgotten that Calvin corresponded with Cranmer and Parker with a view to bringing all the Protestant Churches into one communion. From this correspondence it appears that neither would the foreign Churches have objected to Episcopacy, nor would the English bishops as a

body have objected to such modifications of Episcopacy as would have satisfied the foreign Reformers. The death of Edward and the martyrdom of Cranmer put an end to the first negotiation, and the death of Calvin frustrated the second.

It is comparatively new doctrine for a Protestant community to assert that Episcopacy is the one and only form of valid Church order.

"The founders of the Anglican Church had retained Episcopacy as an ancient, a decent, and a convenient ecclesiastical polity, but had not declared that form of Church government to be of divine institution. In the reign of Elizabeth, Jewel, Cooper, Whitgift, and other eminent doctors defended prelacy as innocent, as useful, as what the State might lawfully establish; as what, when established by the State, was entitled to the respect of every citizen. But they never denied that a Christian community without a bishop might be a pure Church. On the contrary, they regarded the Protestants of the Continent as of the same household of faith with themselves."[1]

In 1603 Convocation solemnly recognised the Church of Scotland, a Church in which episcopal control and episcopal ordination were then unknown, as a branch of the Holy Catholic Church of Christ. It was even held that Presbyterian ministers were entitled to a place and a voice in Œcumenical Councils. English benefices were held by divines who had been admitted to the ministry in the Calvinistic form used on the Continent; nor was re-ordination by a bishop in such cases thought necessary, or even lawful. "There is no difference in any essential matter betwixt the Church of England and her sisters of the Reformation," wrote Bishop Hall. In the sixteenth

[1] Macaulay's *History of England*, Vol. I., p. 75.

century Anglicans denied, and Puritans affirmed, the Divine origin of Church polity. In the seventeenth century the positions were reversed, Anglicans affirming and Puritans tending more and more to deny New Testament authority for a fixed polity. The application of the historical methods of investigation has settled the question once for all.

The Act of Uniformity created a schism in the body. It separated those who were members of the same brotherhood by creating religious inequality in the eye of the law. The growing sensitiveness to this disability is not confined to any one Church. Whatever the privileges accruing to a State Church, the disadvantages are becoming clearer. A Parliament composed of men of all Churches and no Church is not a competent body to legislate for any Church. A State Church is in the position of being driven to stand forth as the defender of its vested interests. It becomes the religious branch of the Civil Service. These considerations make uniformity by law impossible.

Comprehension has been claimed as one of the glories of the Established Church. All the doctrinal teaching found in Nonconformity can be paralleled by teaching, identically the same, which is given inside the State Church. Many sincere men hold that this breadth should enable all to find room in the one fold. The attempt to unite by this method was made after the Revolution; the terms of communion were lowered, but those outside did not enter. Two centuries have passed, and there is still nothing but discussion resulting from such proposals.

Nonconformists may not claim all that Dean Henson in a generous tribute accords them, but he accurately expresses their attitude.

"We cannot now," he says, "discuss the questions involved in reunion in the same spirit as that which was not unnatural when the non-episcopal denominations were recent and small. They have long passed out of the experimental stage, and proved their capacity to fulfil towards their members most, if not all, the functions of Churches. They have laid us under a heavy weight of obligation. If to-day we can speak with any measure of truth of the Christianity of the British Empire, we owe it mainly to the non-episcopal denominations. If in hundreds of our rural hamlets and villages the rustic population has been rescued from the brutality of paganism, we are bound to acknowledge that we owe the fact to other agencies than that of the National Church. The religion of the United States of America is not episcopal. It is matter of fact that, even making allowance for the truly remarkable expansion of Anglicanism during the last century, the Anglican Church does not rank among the larger denominations of Christendom. The proposal to rejoin the National Church, even on favourable terms, can hardly with reason be offered to the representatives of numerous Churches, more powerful and widely dispersed than the National Church itself. Therefore I submit that we must discard the method of comprehension as historically discredited and practically useless."

Nonconformists fail to appreciate the point of view of those who see no other way to reunion than that of absorption of the Free Churches in an expanded National Episcopal Church. It would be reasonable and excellent for those in a safe, big ship, to call to their fellows in little unseaworthy boats, to leave their craft and come on board, but that is not an analogy. There is now one Free Church fleet, carrying at least as many passengers, and as seaworthy as the ships belonging to other

lines. Nonconformity is far beyond the experimental stage. Its right to live and have a place in the sun has been demonstrated by the type of character it has produced and the services it renders to the State.

The old proposals put forward by the *Church Times* met with no response. They were based upon a complete misreading of the facts. What could Free Churchmen say to a concession that

> " all reconciled ministers licensed by the bishops preach in our Churches and in their own Chapels and assist at the sacrament in Churches, on condition that they and their people would resort to the Parish Church for the sacrament, and not allow any celebration in the Chapels " ?

The suggestion only provokes irritation or amusement. Nonconformist ministers do not wish to assist at the sacrament, and their people have no desire to resort to the parish church for the sacrament. Why should they ? They do not regard their history as a series of mistakes and their continued existence as a crime. There is no short cut to any union worth having. There must first be a painstaking effort to understand what are the real oppositions that keep Christians apart. Such knowledge would prevent either party from claiming all the virtue, or pretending that the other side is stupid and schismatic ; it would prevent the irritating sarcasms about Church and Chapel, which are petty and unworthy. It would recognise that the Christian Church is made up of believers in all denominations, that the Good Shepherd's flock is in many folds.

The proposals of the Lambeth Conference have been before the Churches since 1886. We may recall them.

(*a*) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.

(*b*) The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol, and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.

(*c*) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with the unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

(*d*) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

Upon the first of these proposals there is fairly general agreement. It may, however, be asked why, if the Scriptures are admitted as the rule and ultimate standard of faith, there need be any insistence upon a statement of faith in addition. If the two great Creeds are contained in the Scriptures, they are already accepted as part of the standard of faith. If they are not included, but are interpretations of Scripture, why exalt them to the level of Scripture, and insist on their affirmation as a basis of union? The Eastern form of the primitive creed bears clearly the distinct impress of the Nicene age. It is full of echoes of ancient controversies that rent the Church for more than half a century. The Arian heresy made the orthodox party more explicit in their statements of belief concerning the divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost. The very terms of the Creed are resurgent of long and bitter discussions.

Attempts to secure reunion by the acceptance of a common creed have met with little, if any, success. The "Evangelical Alliance," more than

half a century ago, began to work along this line. It was a great thing when over a thousand representative Christians met together and " earnestly and affectionately recommended to each other in their own use of the press, carefully to abstain from, and to put away all bitterness and wrath and clamour and evil speaking with all malice," and to pray weekly on Monday morning for the advancement of Christian unity, and to keep a special season of prayer at the beginning of each year; to seek to avoid " all rash and groundless insinuations, personal imputations or irritating allusions, and to maintain the meekness and gentleness of Christ by speaking the truth only in love." With much more excellent paternal advice in all good faith, the Alliance has been circulated all over the world, but the response has not been encouraging. The result is rather in the direction of theological agreement than Christian union. As a matter of fact, where authoritative creeds are accepted they are interpreted differently. All the varieties of doctrinal teaching found in the Free Churches are taught in Anglican pulpits.

The proposals to unite upon the acceptance of the " Apostles' Creed as the baptismal symbol, and the Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith," do not stand alone. Against them, as a basis of union, it may be urged that, however good and useful, they are not revelations of truth, but only interpretations of truth. They must justify themselves to each generation by standing the tests of any form of investigation and criticism. Creeds as guides to faith, indicating the doctrines of the Church,

as expressions of common agreement in theological opinion to which appeal may be made, are of great value, but creeds used as substitutes for the indwelling Spirit and the revealed will of God in Scripture have been and are a serious hindrance to the spread of truth. Theological thought-forms are not final and ultimate truth. They have been revised as the Nicene Creed was revised and enlarged by the Second Council of Constantinople. They have been formed to express the Church's views upon matters of faith which were in dispute. They were not more the product of agreement than of controversy. In the fourth century, when the Arian heresy was disturbing the minds of the people, the Nicene Creed was formulated to check the new theology and enable all to see what was the doctrine of Christ held by the Church. Its chief emphasis is upon the deity of Jesus Christ.

"He is the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father."

The creed was the formal declaration of the Christian doctrine of Christ. It was the theological expression of the general experience. Christ was the spring of all that was best and noblest. He was the very soul of religion, the power of God unto salvation. Having en-

throned Him in consciousness, the Church recognised His Godhead, and tried to express it in words. With the passing of the years confessions of faith may become as the shells on the seashore, very interesting and beautiful, but devoid of living substance. The currency of belief must be minted from the pure metal of personal experience. Each age must express its faith in its own forms in accord with its own needs and its own realisation of the unseen. Creeds are as milestones on the soul's pilgrimage.

However true, the Nicene Creed is hardly the mould in which the modern mind shapes its faith. Many who draw their inspiration from and build their hopes on the Lord Jesus Christ would not accept this creed as expressing their faith in anything more than a vague and indefinable way. Indeed, all creeds are but attempts to express the Divine reality which is behind all human appearances. They are by their very nature guesses at truth, and have authority not because the Church shelters them, but because in the storm of experience they verify themselves to the mind by their actual correspondence to reality.

Any creed that is a sufficient statement of the Christian faith is quite unnecessary, as that statement has been made upon much better authority in the New Testament. It is certainly open to question whether the Nicene Creed is anything approximating to a sufficient statement of the nature of Deity, and on that subject there is only one utterance in the four Gospels. The Christian faith has much more to do with the relation of God to man, and the duty of man to

God and his neighbour. Jesus taught clearly the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all who trusted Him.[1] The nature of God is not revealed, and human beings have no means of discovering what it is. All that men need to know for practical conduct and comfort is made clear to the obedient heart.[1] In the Nicene Creed there is no word of the Christian's duty to his neighbour, or his obligation to live a holy life, yet conduct and character are the emphatic notes of modern Christian teaching. Reading the great confessions of faith in the clearer light of historical knowledge, it is seen that they were not, and indeed were not intended to be, full and final statements of Divine truth. They were framed as official pronouncements upon disputed doctrine, and were the attempts of sincere souls to refute contemporary error. They take much for granted, and are silent upon matters of vital interest. They are of great importance as expressions of the belief and devotion of the age to which they belong, but they become fruitful causes of insincerity and barriers to unity when they are made tests of belief, final and infallible expressions of truth. However true for the moment, they require restatement as soon as spiritual development enables us to reach another point of view. "The faith which was once delivered unto the saints" was no doubt a body of objective truth, not the creation of opinions, but independent of them. Yet men look upon it from different points of view, and necessarily interpret it in different terms. None see it fully. It is not given to men to see the whole truth and nothing but the truth

[1] JOHN i. 12.

concerning the things of God. All are liable to have their belief distorted by the medium through which the pure ray of truth falls upon the mind. It was not at the beginning, but at the end, of the Church's history that the Apostle looked for that unity of faith of which he speaks, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith."

Professor Sabatier reminds us that the forms of dogma begin to grow old from the day they are consecrated by general consent. "As soon as a few years have passed, they need a translation and a commentary. But the fact that the Church lives on and continues her experiences through the ages, while dogmatic formula from the day when it is adopted remains stationary. A sort of rupture, a disagreement more or less open is produced almost immediately between this stationary formula and the conscience of the advancing Church." There is necessarily a very real distinction between the facts and any Church's reading of them. Many Churches have weakened the forces that make for righteousness by their identification of the truth with their credal interpretation of it.

All are agreed that a creed may be a priceless inheritance, a witness to the universality of the faith. We may say with Bishop Westcott :

"Our creed, whatever it really is, is our sovereign master, or rather our inspiring power. It calls out our energies, it directs their application, it exacts our service. We can have no escape from its dominion, no rest from its influence. We are delivered to it, perhaps as the unconscious victims of a degrading thraldom, perhaps as the eager servants of that which we have gladly recognised to be a Divine will."

But that is only true in the deepest sense of the creed of the heart which grows with the passing years. When all the praise of creeds has been exhausted, we know that they are only man's thoughts on God's truth.

Accepting all that the two creeds affirm, there remain grave reasons for declining to make them the foundation of reunion. At the most, this proposal would only secure agreement of opinion, or rather the use of one form of words to cover a variety of meanings. It is clear that those who accept the same creeds are so far apart in their teaching that the creeds must mean to each one something different from that which they convey to the others. A credal basis is not most favourable to intellectual honesty. There are many men who would refuse to have their own creed imposed upon other minds as a standard of faith. A creed is of value just as far as it is born anew in the living experience of the soul. Belief is not imposed from without, but grown from within. Our experience of truth is never quite the same; our expression of truth will not be the same. Before there could be harmony it would be necessary to secure the same type of mind, the same equipment, the same mood and the same point of view. If we wait for uniformity of this kind as a preliminary to union, there need be no more said upon the subject. It is out of the range of practical affairs.

The proposal to unite upon the basis of the sacraments is advocated by those who hold the view, which largely prevails in the Established Church, that the presence of certain authorised men who have received power through the

Apostolic Succession is necessary to the existence of the Church, its proper ministry and valid sacraments; where they are, there is the Church, and where they do not minister there is no true Church. Opposed to that doctrine is Puritanism with its teaching that religion is not dependent upon the priesthood, that the grace of God is not necessarily or exclusively through the sacramental ministry of any order of men, and that all Christians are in the truest sense priests unto God. The one view makes religion dependent upon a mediating priesthood, while the other makes religion rest upon the immediacy of the Divine Spirit. This is a real difference, which seems fatal to any scheme of reunion. These ideals are represented by men too sincere and earnest to consent to any compromise which would even appear to obscure differences which are vital to their conception of religion. A recent writer, who brings the charms of brotherly sympathy and strong personality to his task, urges the possibility of union on the basis that the Anglican Church might recognise the free preaching and practice maintained by Nonconformists, providing that Free Churchmen accepted the Church's doctrine and system of sacraments. He says :

"The Church as a sacramental body could only recognise and accept the principle of freedom so maintained and practised by Nonconformists where they recognise and accepted the Church principle and practice, that is our doctrine and system of Church sacraments."[1]

Father Kelly leaves no room for doubt as to the

[1] *The Church of Religious Unity*, p. 221.

doctrine of the sacraments he holds. It is wonderfully like that which is expressly condemned in the articles of religion of the Church to which he belongs. He says :

"In the communion, however, I care nothing who the celebrant is, so long only as he has authority to do this thing. It is his ministry only to add the NOW of time to the THIS of the bread and wine. I have only to ask that he shall do rightly that which he is bidden to do. It is nothing to me really what his personal character or even belief may be. It is right that no man should be appointed to this ministry who is not a good and holy man. Irreverence, unbelief, unfitness in him jar and fret me by their disharmony, but while they may hinder my appreciation, what is set forth and given is the Body of Christ. To that the celebrant's character neither adds nor takes away anything whatever."[2]

In return for accepting sacerdotalism, the free ministry of Nonconformity is to receive recognition such as that given to the Friars of old:

"The Church, if she is to reach the fulness of her life, must have—and when she has reached it she will have—both an official sacramental ministry and a free ministry, organised and unorganised, such as that which Nonconformity supplies to-day, and the Friars supplied of old. I only state that as a principle, but I mean to imply what I seem to imply, a mutual recognition, for the true way to reach that fulness of life is by the reunion of those who have possessed themselves of the two severed factors."[2]

The most precise character of the recognition which the Church might give is that

"Some of the ministers of the organisation might be ordained. If so, they become a supplementary part of the official system, both in its sacramental and teaching

[2] *The Church of Religious Unity*, p. 112. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

activity. On the other hand, it might be better they should not be formally recognised."

As Father Kelly says, "there seems to be a psychological law which blinds us to our own inconsistencies." He asks whether Nonconformists would have Churchmen unite by surrendering their principles, and begs us to "receive that which the Church has to give, unless we think our Nonconformist system complete and perfect." Because we regard all ecclesiastical systems as human, it is impossible for us to view them as final and complete. We would go a long way to join hands with men of the spirit of this writer. They are the salt of the Church to which they belong, and it would be a great delight openly to manifest the unity of heart which already exists between us. But there is something more to be said. We submit in all kindliness of spirit that we have a higher doctrine of the Church and of the sacraments than even the Catholic party in the Church of England has developed. It seems to us that there is neither wisdom nor justification in making the soul's approach to God and God's approach to the soul dependent upon a complex method that depends upon so much that is always liable to be deranged. There are so many links in the chain that seem too weak to bear so great a burden of assumption, and if the Apostolic Succession were capable of historic proof, which has not yet been shown, it would still remain that sacramentalism puts a limit upon Divine grace which has no place in the teaching of Jesus or in the character of God. The Lord is universal. Where He is, there is the chartered channel of grace, which is free to all who come

unto Him. If Nonconformists err in making sacraments too subjective, they think that their brothers of the Catholic fold make them too narrow and mechanical, and run too great a risk in conditioning their validity upon imperfect men.

The fundamental difference was long ago stated by Principal Fairbairn, and the position remains unanswered, if not unanswerable.

"Here, then, lies the fundamental difference—the cardinal truth of Sacerdotalism is ecclesiology, but the cardinal truth of Puritanism is theology. The one magnifies the Church, the other magnifies God. The one must have a Church that it may have religion, the other must have religion and truth that it may have a Church. Sacerdotalism may have a splendid idea of the Church and its history, but to secure it the idea of God has to be made narrow and mean, adjusted to the spirit and aims and achievements of the institution that claims to be 'the chartered channel' of His grace. Puritanism has a broad and generous idea of God, which lifts it above the poor realism of its own and all other Churches, and enables it to regard them as humble means to a Divine end, and agencies for the creation of a sublimer religion than history has yet seen realised.

"The sublimity of Sacerdotalism is sensuous, it appeals to the eye and heart by the wonderful historical structure which has needed so many hands and so many ages to build up; but the sublimity of Puritanism is spiritual, it appeals to the spirit and imagination by the marvellous idea of God and those purposes of His that needed an eternity for their shaping, that need time for their unfolding, and will need an eternity for their fulfilment. The ultimate truth, then, through which we live and on which we build, which governs all our thoughts and determines all our ideals and endeavours, is the Eternal and Sovereign Fatherhood, absolute and universal in its grace. By Him and unto Him are all things; Churches are means in His hands, created for His ends; they are to be judged through Him, He is not to be conceived through, or comprehended by, them.

Nay, more, not only they, but the religion they exist to realise must be interpreted, not through canons or decrees of councils, not through priests and sacraments, not through bishops and popes; but through—and through only—the truth of the regal and regnant Fatherhood.

"Now, this fundamental truth gives us a truer and higher conception of the reign and providence of God than is expressed in any theory of ecclesiastical supernaturalism. We do not believe in a forsaken humanity, which knows God's presence only as it possesses a marvellous Church; we affirm that nature is everywhere rooted in His real yet supernatural activity; that our history everywhere manifests it, for 'in Him all live, move, and have their being.'[1] We do not believe in sacraments so little sacramental as to depend for their very being on so immense a series of accidents as an official succession, mechanically regulated, of mortal and fallible men; we maintain that the channels and means of His grace are as infinite in their variety as the ways of His working. Our fathers said: We must realise a theocratic State; the ideal of the Old Testament is not a sacred mysterious thing intended to remain remote from all reality, but is meant for realisation. God ought to be our King, the State ought to be His Church, the people ought to stand in covenant relations with Him, His moral their civil and religious law. We affirm the ancient principle, but change the application, and say: The New Testament ideal is the true one; we are bound to realise it, to translate it through our Churches into the realities of thought, society, and the State. The New Testament does not represent simply a miraculous, but a creative moment; from that moment forward it was God's purpose that His Kingdom should, through the Churches of His Son, take creative and corporate being on earth. We deny that the age of miracles is past; it is an age that ever is, for there ever is the living God who inspires the spirits that believe, guides the society of His saints, and never ceases to work among men in behalf of His truth. In this there is a grander theory of the Divine Presence and the Divine Providence than any ever expressed in the doctrines of Apostolic Succession, Episcopal Grace, or an Infallible Chair. God has never left Himself without a witness. His

[1] ACTS xvii. 28.

lines are gone out through all the earth, and His Word unto the ends of the world.

"Our fundamental difference, then, is theological; it reposes on the sovereign paternity of God, and His immediate relation through Jesus Christ with all men. But this implies a second, no less decisive and determinative—the conditions of acceptance with Him are all spiritual and ethical. They are in no respect sensuous and formal, depending on rites observed or external relations established; but universal and possible to all men, they spring out of the very natures of God and man, and what may be described as their primary and essential relations. God is spirit, and man is spirit; He seeks after man, and man feels after Him; and the conditions are such as become those natures and these relations. 'He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that seek after Him.'[1] Other conditions can no man frame than God has framed: 'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God,'[2] and to be so begotten is to be 'an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ.'"[3]

Without bitterness we must recognise that the truth does not all lie with one side or the other. The time has not come for surrender of either view, but for the recognition that each contains something that the other lacks. Unity of interpretation is not yet within our reach, and cannot be the basis of fellowship. We are agreed that in the sacraments there is a real communication of grace that strengthens the soul. While the mystery is unexplained, we rejoice in the reality that we receive grace in our forms and the Catholic receives grace in his forms from the one and only source, the Lord, who is through all and above all and in us all. Father Kelly's work is admirable in tone and temper, but the doctrine which he insists upon as the foundation of union is too

[1] HEB. xi. 6. [2] 1 JOHN v. 1. [3] ROM. viii. 17.

narrow. Its catholicity is not sufficiently catholic. It does not bring the real Presence nearer, but practically puts the priest between the sinner and the Saviour. It rests not upon the teaching of Jesus but upon the authority of a small section of the Church.

The fourth article has been interpreted to mean that the State Church will concede nothing on the question of governmental order, but insists upon imposing her form upon all the Churches and demands the reordination of all ministers by episcopal bishops. These conditions are not likely to meet with any more favour than has already been shown. Nonconformists will never accept these terms. Why should they? It is not shown that any particular form of ordination confers any special grace of efficacy which is not now possessed by those who have entered the ministry by other avenues. Without denying the validity of the ministry of any other Church, Free Churchmen insist upon the valid ministry of their own pastors.

Underlying the demand that Nonconformist ministers shall submit to conditional reordination is the assumption that now they have no right to minister the Word of God and the sacrament to the people. It may be claimed that every form of blessing resting upon the ministry of those who have been episcopally ordained is also seen resulting from the ministry of those who have no such ordination.

In return for the acceptance of Episcopacy there is offered the reunion of the Churches by comprehension. That would not be union, but absorption. If it were ever likely to become anything

more than the day-dream of an uninformed imagination, it might seriously be questioned whether such a condition would not be a real hindrance to the Christian religion. It is clear that half the people who attend public worship in England prefer the services of non-episcopal Churches. Their spiritual needs are met by the ministry they possess. They are not likely to be attracted by any such proposals for uniformity. While there remain differences of temperament, taste, mental outlook and spiritual perception, there will be different types of ministry and varied forms of worship. Those who seek to gain unity by this crude and easy method have mistaken the very nature of Christian union, and are doomed to disappointment; nobody but themselves desires such absorption.

Such uniformity would enormously add to the burden of artificiality which already weighs heavily upon British Christianity. To the man in the street it would appear that Nonconformist ministers have been attracted by the benefits of "establishment" rather than the blessings of fellowship. It would be the surest way to kill their influence with the people. While the supposed advantages of the State establishment of religion might be continued a little longer by some such arrangement, it is difficult to see what else would result. It certainly would not strengthen the note of reality, and any reunion to be worth while must mean something other than personal gain to the clergy. It must be true union, not subjection, but whole-hearted acceptance of an ideal that can only be fully expressed in a living, coherent fellowship of souls.

The trend of great movements in the National Church as well as outside is in the direction of democratising all Church institutions. Government of the Church by the Church is a principle which has grown slowly, but in recent years has accelerated its progress and is sure to move even more rapidly. Church membership without obligation is already felt to be a weakness and an anomaly. Government cannot always be the monopoly of the clergy. The Congregational ideal is not only voiced in the Established Church, it is being applied.

It is frequently urged that the impassable barrier to Christian union is the fact of an Established Church, and that the best way to secure union is to work for disestablishment. It can hardly be denied that the establishment of any Church perpetuates separation, but is it so certain that disestablishment would result in drawing the Churches closer together? The position of the Anglican Church in relation to the State may be changed by any General Election, but the vital things that divide English Christians would not be altered by anything that Parliament could do. The Episcopal Church disestablished might be more widely separated from the Protestant Free Churches than she now appears to be. Political differences often obscure deeper and more fundamental distinctions. In the final analysis it may be discovered that the Churches are separated in their conceptions of religion.

Perhaps enough has been said to account for the failure to secure unity through uniformity of organisation, or identity of theological opinion. These are not the only avenues open to earnest

men. They may be the paths to follow in some distant future, but the solution of our problem is much simpler and near at hand. If we cannot agree upon everything, let us find out the things about which we do agree, and begin there.

IX

The Union now Possible

"So many objections might be made to everything that nothing could overcome them but the necessity of doing something."—Dr. Samuel Johnson.

"The ideal of unity for which we must strive is not one that ignores differences or treats them as unimportant, but one that seeks, by patient and prayerful thought, to ascertain the elements of truth in all conflicting opinions, and to embrace them in a richer and higher and reconciling unity. The plan of promoting unity which commends itself to their mind is one that, while it seems to them more difficult, more protracted in its working and more costly, appears also safer and more truly conducive to the health of the Church of Christ. They desire that, by seizing every opportunity of personal intercourse, by the avoidance of arrogance and the spirit of criticism, by earnest study of the questions that divide and by unceasing prayer, those who are at present separated should seek to be led by the Spirit of God into a unity in which all that is true and vital in the principles and practices of each may be preserved and reconciled."

Edinburgh Missionary Conference Report.

IX

The Union now Possible

DISSENT was created by the Act of Uniformity, and only by the repeal of that Act will it come to an end. It is clear that union will not result from legislation. Parliament may remove ancient inequalities which are barriers between Christ's people and thus take away the causes of much bitterness and ill-feeling, but, after all, the best service Parliament can render religion is to leave it alone. Union must come by growth in affinity. It is a slow process, only possible in an atmosphere of liberty. The absence of a State Church does not make a nation unchristian, nor does it necessarily lead to union among the Churches.

Efforts in the direction of Christian union are now being made to secure a federation of Free Churches having an Evangelical basis. Those coming into closer alliance would retain all their present doctrinal and governmental forms while agreeing to recognise each other's ministry, sacraments and discipline. They would freely interchange ministers and transfer Church members. It is claimed that this would secure the much needed redistribution of forces and prevent the overlapping which is the despair of all who realise its waste and evil effects. How far this is likely to succeed need not be discussed until the larger

denominations have given their views upon the proposals.

The Free Churches have not yet been able to adjust themselves to the changed ideas that dominate the thinking of those within their own borders. The official mind is naturally conservative and averse to change. The almost silent revolution that has taken place among Nonconformists in their attitude to denominationalism must find expression. The old watchwords that were battle-cries still ring from the platforms, but they do not awaken the ancient enthusiasm in the lay mind, simply because we have reached a new point of view.

The belief that God has spoken "in many distinct messages," and worked His sovereign will "by various methods," making each contribute to the enrichment of the whole, compels the Churches to think differently of each other. Once they insisted that one was right and the others wrong. Now they are coming to see that each had a place in the providential order and Divine purpose, that the whole truth, and nothing but the truth is not the possession of any one community, but each came into existence to supply something the other lacked, or failed to interpret to the people. The Anglican emphasised authority and sacramental grace; the Baptist insisted upon a regenerate Church and the recognition of Christ as Lord in His own household; the Congregationalist stood for the right of the individual soul, and the competency of the individual community to fulfil all the spiritual functions of the Church; the Methodists proclaimed the necessity of personal regeneration and the priesthood of the layman;

the Presbyterians stood for Synodical government, Calvinistic theology and a dignified service ; the Quakers bore faithful testimony to the reality of the inner light that guides into all spiritual truth, as one follows the light possessed. These were not antagonistic and mutually destructive, but rather supplementary and corrective. They have acted and reacted upon each other not for harm, but for untold good. Each has gained in the passing of the years from the ministry of the others.

The intercommunication of ideas has compelled a larger outlook and deeper interest in the life and thought of other communities. Denominational barriers cannot exclude ideas. Just as intercommunication between countries is fatal to racial singularity, and the work of the railway engineer has united countries until it has become possible to think of mankind as one, and the world as a single unit, so the spread of modern knowledge has linked up the denominations. Theoretically, the differences remain as before, but in active working they no longer exist, except perhaps in odd illustrations of the law of reversion to type. The outlook cannot be restricted to any one denomination. It is simply impossible for intelligent people to believe that the God and Father of us all has committed the whole truth concerning His Church to the care of a few, and has left the great majority of His children without any guidance, though they have earnestly sought it. Any such view cannot be fitted into the modern ideas of the character of God. The doctrine of the Divine immanence has saturated the mind of our generation. The nearness of the Divine is a

haunting thought which cannot be excluded. He is in all the Churches, for "in Him we live and move and have our being."

The ideas of solidarity and kinship have penetrated all communities. They are proclaimed from Brotherhood platforms, Guild meetings, Study Circles and Endeavour Societies. The most exclusive denominationalist cannot get free from them. They are met on every hand, in politics, literature and social life. There is an Imperialistic spirit abroad. Our outlook is from the viewpoint of Empire. The parochial view exists, and will continue to exist, but it cannot exclude the larger vision. The stirring of the new spirit in response to the appeal to kinship has breathed a new message of unity to us all. Everywhere the value of co-operation and combination is evident. The Church cannot shut its eyes to the characteristic lesson of the times. This is the age of federation and union, the amalgamated Press, the co-operative shop, the international movement. Religion cannot be the one sphere in which isolation is to survive. Co-operation in good works multiplies the power of each in the service of all. It is already recognised in many agencies, and will increasingly be the method adopted. The forces of the age are working for liberty and for progress through greater unity. That they are undermining many a cherished prejudice and disturbing many a traditional arrangement in all the Churches cannot be questioned, and ought not to be regretted. There is more work for them to do, but their operation need not be dreaded by those who care more for principles than for methods, who are more desirous to have a system

adapted to the life and work of the present than one conformed to the precedents of the past, and who have faith that no change in human plans can weaken the power of that spiritual life which is independent of all systems and in which alone the true strength of the Church is found.

The Free Churches have drawn much closer to each other in recent years, but they have not yet given any practical shape to the sentiments on the subject of union they all profess. The time is ripe for a representative body to be officially appointed by the denominations, at least to go as far as to take joint action for the provision of places of worship in new districts, the transfer of members, and the training of candidates for the ministry. This would prepare the way for larger union by making clear beyond question that the Free Evangelical Churches are now one great confederation whose individual members, agreeing to differ on minor points, are yet bound together by common principles, common sympathies and common aims which vastly transcend in importance anything that is sectional or peculiar to any one denomination. The unity already existing demands formal expression to visualise that for which Christians are longing with intense hope and aspiration. This may be the crowning glory of Nonconformity in our time, and the creative factor in restoring the lost faith of the democracy in the Church as an institution.

The many attempts to secure union by ill-matured proposals put forward by unofficial conferences have resulted in harm rather than good to the Churches. The dreamland advocacy of ecclesiastical Utopias may be interesting as part

of a Swiss picnic, but it does not lead to practical results. This is not the time for any fusion of Conformists and Nonconformists. To be true to their ideals men must express their positive beliefs and refuse that neutral latitudinarianism, which would be a betrayal. Recognising this we may still find a way to bridge the gulf of division, at least to enable the Churches to join in a real manifestation of their unity in Christian service.

Hegel says that " the true tragedy is the conflict of right with right, not of right with wrong." It is now recognised that one of the most prolific causes of irreligion is sectarian strife with its usual accompaniments of ignorance and bitterness. Good men all over the country are earnestly seeking to find means of closer co-operation among those, who though called by different names, recognise the Lord Christ as their Master, and are seeking to represent Him among men. Happily the day has gone by in which clergymen could speak of Free Church ministers as if they were a community of " Stigginses " and " Chadbands," or Free Church ministers could describe the clergy as the representatives of the harlot of Babylon. At times the whole Church is shocked by some clergyman in the parish of Slocum-in-the-mud, who refuses to give Christian burial to the dead body of a little child because the Nonconformist parents did not seek to have their boy baptised. No wonder that righteous indignation burns fiercely when the excuse for such pagan action is pleaded in the name of Christian principle. But it is well to remember that men of this type are survivals of a day that has gone. Occasionally we are all startled by a fiery denunciation

of the Established Church uttered by a Nonconformist extremist in language which is an outrage of all the laws of Christian principle and brotherhood. Immediately it calls forth just condemnation from all right-minded people.

We cannot afford to continue our isolation. We are as regiments of one army, carrying out separate and neutralising plans of campaign. In some places, our forces are so congested that it is really difficult to find much to do. We are operating in the same area and dealing with the same people. Our presence is a confession of unchristian rivalry and folly. In other districts, we are almost entirely unrepresented. Even where Churches abound, we are impotent for lack of co-operation. Hoffding says :

" Religion was once the pillar of fire, which went before the human race in its great march through history, showing it the way. Now it is fast assuming the role of the ambulance which follows in the rear and picks up the exhausted and wounded. This, too, is a great work, but it is not sufficient, and when religion has disburdened herself of all her dead values, she will once more in intimate association with ethics rise to be a fire which leads men forward."

Even our ambulance work is badly done while we lack a common base of united action. If Hoffding's prophecy comes true, it will only be brought to pass by attempting to heal our own divisions before offering advice to others. Is it comedy or tragedy that those who profess to be members of the same family, representing the same Master, and hoping to arrive at the same final goal, should be as little known to each other as those who speak different languages and represent different races ? The time will come when Christians will feel the disgrace of their divisions.

We all deplore the apathy and indifference of the masses to religion, but is not the Church herself largely to blame? Have we not created confusion, perhaps contempt, in the mind of the average man by our divisions?

We shall not further our purpose by any attempt at compromise. There are two methods usually in the mind of advocates of re-union. One is that of addition. Some standard is set up which is regarded as the combination of all vital elements of the Church, and each community is invited to add what they think necessary. It has been tried many times and necessarily meets with failure. The other is described as the method of subtraction. It puts on one side all that gives offence. When its task is completed, there is not much left for which strong men care to contend. The time is not yet ripe for the realisation of our hope. We must recognise that intelligent men do not remain in religious communities simply because of the accident of birth.

Let us turn to a consideration of the possibilities of practical co-operation. Convinced of the weakness of disunion, it is our business to find means by which we can bring all our forces into concerted action against evil. To this end, we might with advantage form a league of politeness. In Berlin such an organisation has been started for tram and 'bus conductors, who promise to show politeness to all passengers. It might be a gain if clergy and ministers of all denominations would unite in a similar pledge to show politeness upon all possible occasions. There is an Apostolic injunction, "Be kind." We may begin by being polite. A clergyman of our acquaintance, in

conversation upon this subject, remarked that it was wonderful how rude ministers could be to each other.

Let us seek a better understanding. An occasional friendly conference without an audience to applaud or a scribe to report would enable us frankly to seek each other's point of view. The late Hugh Price Hughes created much amusement by telling Lord Halifax and a number of clergy at a meeting of clergy and ministers that "the average vicar knew more about the people in Timbuctoo than about the minister of the Chapel within a stone's throw of the Parish Church." Is that still true? Educated Nonconformists are fairly familiar with the works of the great writers, the scholars and the saints of the Established Church. One may see the sermons of Charles Haddon Spurgeon and Dr. Maclaren in almost any vicar's library. We are indebted to each other. We need each other. Is it not time that we dropped our diplomatic aloofness and came together honestly desiring to see each other's point of view? Conferences between clergy and ministers yield some curious and humorous results. It is little short of a revelation to discover that the minister of the Chapel is really an educated man, that he knows something about Church history, and has some acquaintance with the Fathers, while it is a novel experience for Nonconformist ministers to find that the High Church curate, who denounces them in the blood and thunder style, is really a charming man, quite sincere and well meaning. It is impossible for men to come together for friendly conference without learning each other's good qualities and

getting a clearer glimpse of the other side of the problem. Certainly it makes the old style of speaking of each other impossible.

The co-operation might for a year with advantage be restricted to social service. The Churches have long arrears of work in this direction to overtake. They have allowed the municipality almost to forget that they have any place or right to be heard when local questions vital to the moral life of the people are being settled. It is within our power to lift the standard of civic duty still higher, to make it impossible for any man lacking in moral character to be returned as the representative of the people upon any public body. There is a terrible responsibility upon those who stand apart when so much may be accomplished. It is possible to restore the moral enthusiasm of the Church, to make her a burning, as well as a shining, light. This is the duty of the hour. Here is a new crusade which may be the beginning of a new Catholicism of Christian social service, a crusade more glorious than that preached by St. Bernard, for we seek not to recover the grave of the Christ, but to help the people whom He loved and died to save.

It may be said that each separate Church in its own district is doing this work, and nothing would be gained by increasing our organisations, of which there are too many already in existence. Where the Churches are rendering social service, it is almost exclusively in the form of charity. No doubt splendid work is being done by individual Churches, but its value would be increased tenfold by co-operation. "If each man sweeps in front of his door, the street will be clean"

is sometimes quoted in this connection, but after all the private sweeping there is need of collective action to provide the main drainage to complete the work of sanitation.

Some years ago the present writer advocated the formation of "Guilds of Better Understanding," in which clergy and ministers could meet for joint conference upon matters in which they might co-operate for the good of the community, and thus to seek re-union in social service. The proposal was readily taken up in several districts, and "The Joint Conference" became an established institution. Bishops, clergy and ministers of all denominations have met in friendly intercourse. In united prayer they have found mutual help. In promoting the social well-being of others they have discovered a common objective and a strong bond of union. Prejudice has been removed and a consciousness of comradeship has been awakened. Some conferences have met to discuss questions of theology and Church order. It was not to be expected that there would be general agreement, but it has been an agreeable surprise to discover much common ground quite naturally and without effort. A new attitude has been assumed by those who regarded themselves as opponents. A new spirit is shown by the members in their speech to each other. There is something like a *truce of God* in the eagerness to avoid bitterness and controversy which widen our unhappy divisions. Without ignoring differences, the truth has been spoken in love. This new and novel intercourse has fostered mutual respect, widened the outlook, and made rough places easier to pass. Among the gains not the

least important have been those accruing to the ministers themselves.

In some districts the Conferences have promoted courses of lectures on Christian Evidences, others have organised special services for non-church goers. These services have been taken by various representative ministers. In other districts united missionary meetings on the lines of the Edinburgh Conference have been held. The social work, as far as possible, has been done without attracting publicity. It has been most useful in the direction of supplying information to, and co-operating with, Watch Committees of Town Councils in the interests of public morals. This plan of campaign has been successful in securing the removal of automatic machines showing unclean pictures, warning shopkeepers who displayed questionable post-cards and thus securing their withdrawal, closing betting offices and indecent exhibitions, clearing bad houses and getting insanitary dwellings condemned. In some cases public house licences have been successfully opposed, and attempts to elevate the tone of municipal administration have been made by persuading suitable men to become candidates for seats on public bodies. Work has been undertaken for special classes of the community, and means have been found to prevent overlapping in the distribution of charity, and to frustrate the ingenuity of professsional cadgers who prey upon ministers and Churches.

This work, done unobtrusively and systematically, has already resulted in great good, and is sure to be largely extended. It is practical and provides a common platform. As it becomes

recognised, its influence upon the Churches is excellent. It is an object lesson in the advantages of Christian union.

The Conference of Bishops approved this plan in 1908. Their report says that :

"The Committee believes that few things tend more directly to godly union and concord than co-operation between members of different communions in all matters pertaining to the social and moral welfare of the people. It is in the common service of humanity, in the name of Him who is its Lord, that the ties of friendly relationship are most readily created and most surely strengthened."

The bishops passed a resolution urging :

"That every opportunity should be welcomed of co-operation between members of different communions in all matters pertaining to the social and moral welfare of the people."

This is a great advance from the old attitude of isolation. Co-operation is virtual union as far as it goes. The old questions of Church order, the validity of the ministry, and the proper administration of the sacraments still remain, and seem likely to remain. We have not yet opened our pulpits to each other. Those who are interested in these controversies may continue their discussions. The brilliant platform orators may go on with their speeches and the Church Defence Unions and the Liberation Society can prosecute their campaigns ; but meanwhile there are useful and urgent works to be done which cannot be accomplished by any one Church, but can be done by the Churches in co-operation.

No sacrifice or even compromise of principle is involved. It is not suggested that the bishops should become Baptist pastors or the Congre-

gationalists should seek admission into the ranks of the clergy. After a century of warfare among themselves there is no sign of a decisive victory for either camp. Has not the time arrived to try another plan? The alternative proposed has at least this advantage, it works. The results have been excellent, they are concrete. They are seen in practical gains in the districts where the Churches have united for social service. It is surely an enormous advantage to have the forces of the Christian communities marshalled under wise leadership. The powers of evil are rampant; while the army of the Lord is split up in mutual antagonism, they have nothing to fear. Combined for social amelioration, the Churches become the rallying forces for righteousness. They are once more the Church militant able to take the field for the liberation of the oppressed and the defence of the weak. They can create that public opinion without which the wisest statesmanship is powerless. They still have the ear of a large public, and the right-thinking people in any community will listen sympathetically; they may, if they will, find a new and a larger congregation among those who have lost all interest in ecclesiastical discussion.

There was a time when the Church was the centre of the life of the parish. It cared for the poor, nursed the sick, educated the children. These works are now being done collectively; the Guardians of the Poor, Hospital Committees and Education Authorities have the administration. In these spheres the Churches count for less than ever. The social work open to any one Church relying upon its own resources in men and

money is becoming very limited both in area and utility. The changes which have taken place in modern England, the depopulation of the villages, the rapid growth of trading companies, changing a nation of shop-keepers into a nation of shop-assistants, the facilities for education open to the poorest children, the growing power of Trade Unions, the deepened sense of discontent and the consciousness of power possessed by the democracy, have made it impossible for the Churches to continue their work upon the old lines. Not only their usefulness but their very existence is threatened.

The Churches must reconsider their own objective. There is an appalling confusion of aim. To justify their existence they must attempt their own proper work. It is not enough for them to achieve small successes in works which could be quite as legitimately and adequately accomplished by any respectable social club or political union. If it is agreed that the only worthy object of the Churches is the extension of the Kingdom of God on earth, then first things must be put first and kept first.

"Christianity," says the author of "Ecce Homo," "would sacrifice its divinity if it abandoned its missionary character and became a mere educational institution. When the power of reclaiming the lost dies out of the Church, it ceases to be the Church. It may remain a useful institution, though it is most likely to become an immoral and a mischievous one. Where the power remains, there, whatever is wanting, it may still be said that the tabernacle of God is with men."[1]

The extension of the Kingdom by the salvation of men is not alone the task of mending broken

[1] *Ecce Homo*, Chap. xxi.

earthenware. By all means let us rescue the man who fell among thieves. Let his wounds be bound up and cared for, but let us see to it that the thieves are compelled to change their trade, and the road made safe for the pilgrims to travel.

We have learned that salvation is a much greater matter than used to be supposed. While it must ever begin with the individual, it does not end with him. The saved man must seek the salvation of his fellows. No man liveth to himself alone; he is part of Society; upon him rests the responsibility of working together with God in the great redemption process. Christ's authority must be established in all human relationships—domestic, civic, commercial, industrial, educational, political, municipal, national, and international. Righteousness cannot be excluded from any department of our manifold life. Christ is Lord of all, and all must be claimed in His name. The spiritual must penetrate and dominate the material. Without leaving other work undone, we must recognise that seven-tenths of the evil of the times is preventable.

The open road to Christian reunion is the path of service for the common good. Let us begin by manifesting our points of agreement. Two men stand together, one is six feet high, the other is only five feet ten; we at once remark on the two inches of difference, forgetting the five feet ten which they have in common. There has been sufficient discussion. Would it not be well to drop the discussion and get on with the work? Perhaps in this also, they that do the will of God shall know the doctrine. For two hundred years and more, Christendom has heard the contro-

versy between the rival communities. There is reasonable doubt concerning many points in dispute, the whole truth is not possessed by any one community. There is no question about the urgent need of united action if England is to be saved from the forces that strike at the very heart of religion. While the wordy warfare drags on, the common enemy is at the gates. There is no suggestion that the Churches should surrender anything but their isolation. Each is asked to concede to the others the right to work in holy fellowship for the good of all.

It is clear that union is necessary to the right performance of the Church's primary duty to the people. This active co-operation is union of a practical character. It is possible and concrete. In any community—however small—there are the tasks that call for united action. Where the Churches have failed, the Church can still succeed.

The National Council of Evangelical Free Churches has enabled Nonconformity to realise something of its strength and to focus its forces. Where the local Free Church Council is a living organisation, it brings a consciousness of fellowship to the Churches represented, and provides the necessary agency for united evangelism, conventions for the deepening of the spiritual life, religious services for the inmates of public institutions, temperance advocacy, social reform propaganda, and any purposes that may be deemed within the scope of Free Church work.

In the Established Church, the Diocesan Council and other agencies provide the machinery through which churchmen can take united action and collectively influence public opinion. These

organisations serve useful ends. Their power is acknowledged, but they are sectional, too often they stand for Church *versus* Chapel interests, they are necessarily partisan and will remain so. They represent the Churches, not the Church. In many efforts they fail for this reason, they stand only for half the Christian opinion of the country. Has not the time arrived for a united Church Council for Social Service in each district, in which clergy and ministers with their combined forces could co-operate for the general well-being? When this union is effected, the Churches will exert a power far beyond anything they have shown in modern times. They would be at once the strongest agency for cleansing and sweetening the common life of the people. In any town in the country, the united expression of the Christian conscience by the representatives of the Churches would receive serious attention by all parties.

Beginning at some point of agreement allows the free play of sympathy in a common task which softens asperity and leads to further union. It enables clergy and ministers to sit side by side in conference, instead of taking sides in controversy. This itself is a great advance. It creates a new temper, in which subjects are examined. The recognition of a common aim in social service enables men to enter into larger conceptions of unity. There is a touch of kinship which makes them one.

Union through co-operation is already being realised in many parts of the foreign mission field. In the Divine providence it seems more than likely that the Churches in heathen lands which have grown out of the self-sacrifice and

labour of missionaries from the home country will be the pioneers in the task of Christian unity.

Bishop Graves, of Shanghai, speaking at the Pan-Anglican Congress in London in 1908, stated that :

> " There is a great movement among the Chinese converts for union, a desire for the essentials of Christianity, as distinct from the differences started and developed in other countries. If the influence of such differences were removed Chinese Christians would probably coalesce in one body."

A large amount of evidence supporting this statement can be produced, not only with regard to Christian opinion in China, but also with regard to similar, though perhaps as yet not so definite and powerful, tendencies in other mission fields. The Edinburgh Committee wisely remarks : " Before, however, either such co-operation or unity can be looked for, that spirit of considerateness, fair dealing, Christian courtesy and brotherliness, which is called comity, must be prevalent." In the homeland we have much of the comity; may we not now proceed to the further co-operation ?

It is a matter of great thankfulness that all over the world Christian communities are moving towards closer fellowship, and asking why the broken unity of the Church of Christ may not be healed. In South Africa there is a standing committee dealing with co-operation and comity among missionaries. The Societies operating in areas not yet fully occupied are invited to arrange between themselves as to a demarcation of their spheres, and that in areas already occupied by one or more missionary societies, it is urged that no other Society should enter, except by agreement

with those already in the field, that Church members of one mission temporarily visiting the sphere of another should bring with them certificates of membership, and should be recognised. In Shanghai there is a missionary association for the promotion of Christian fellowship and union and the discussion of practical questions bearing upon the success of missionary work, the improvement of members in the knowledge of the Chinese people and of the language, the dissemination and acquisition of the information more or less directly connected with missions to the Chinese. In Southern India there is already an association to provide the means of consultation and of united action. Japan has its standing committee of co-operating missions which serves as a general medium of reference, communication and effort for the co-operating missions in matters of common interest and in co-operative enterprises, particularly with regard to the distribution of forces for evangelistic, educational, eleemosynary work. The constitution of the Kiangsu Federation Council has adopted the following objects as its purpose :

" To promote the unity and sympathetic co-operation of believers, looking to the realisation of Christ's desire for the unity of His Church, for, as this spirit grows and our work spreads, there is hope that all denominations will carry out the plans for union adopted by the Federation Council, there shall be no interference, however, in the freedom of action of each Missionary Society."

In the Philippine Islands there is an Evangelical Union formed to unite all the evangelical forces in the islands to secure comity and effectiveness in missionary operations.

The delimitation of territory is only a temporary measure, but it has been found to work successfully in securing the presence of a most effective agency and preventing the waste of overlapping. The refusal to receive members of one communion into another without first obtaining information as to character has been a great safeguard and a gain to the moral value of Church membership. It has made discipline possible. Some Christian bodies stand aloof from any attempts at joint action, and it is impossible to coerce them. The need of the moment is a larger vision and truer charity. The true path to union is the road of service, some blessings are only gained when they are not the objects of the quest.

It may be objected that union through co-operation is a very slow growth and is still in the far-distant future. But is that really the fact? There is already a large body of lay opinion enthusiastic in its support, and it is steadily winning its way among the clergy and ministers who recognise that it is the only kind of union now possible, and that it is demanded by the changed conditions of English life. It is perfectly clear that in the industrial centres all the Churches are inadequate in men and money to meet the religious needs of the increasing populations. Yet the waste of overlapping continues, and in the majority of parishes the various Churches are working blindly ignorant of each other's ministry. Co-operation of the most elementary character would enormously increase the working power of all the Churches.

By their divisions the Churches are quenching

the Spirit and lowering the Divine ideal. They are sectional and individualistic. When they come to see clearly that in co-operation they really unite they will return to their ancient power and enthusiasm. They will not permit little prejudices or personal advantages to keep them apart. Whom God hath joined together let not denominationalism put asunder. Now as never before is the golden opportunity for a great Christian leader to gather up the forces, born of the time-spirit, which are making for unity, and to marshal the hosts in a great crusade for the extension of the Kingdom of God.

X

The Tasks awaiting the United Church

" Having done something we shall find it easier to do more. Unexpected ways will open to us by which we shall be enabled to bring our experience and endowments to the service of our Church, to the service of Christ, and such service will react upon our own spiritual life."

BISHOP WESTCOTT.

" Let all good citizens, then, combine to fight shoulder to shoulder to enforce the New Testament Gospel as opposed to the gospel of the world, and it will not be too late to bring back the nation to such duty and discipline as may bring down upon it again the blessing of the duty-loving God."

THE BISHOP OF LONDON.

" The Gospel cannot be preached in Christ's way in England to-day if the industrial and social basis of Society is at many points in plain violation of the principles of the law and the prophets, and we suffer it to be so without protest."—THE BISHOP OF OXFORD.

X

The Tasks awaiting the United Church

The work that awaits the united Church is urgent and practical. In all probability, the State will increasingly attempt objects hitherto regarded as belonging peculiarly to the sphere of Christian service. The nation will accomplish them upon a far larger scale than was possible for those who depended upon voluntary workers and free-will offerings. But there will always remain a vocation for those who have the vision. We may rejoice that the tasks attempted and imperfectly accomplished by Christian communities are being recognised as duties which the nation must undertake. The Church will be at liberty to move onward to new paths of ministry. Christianity has always been a pioneer and a path-finder in philanthropic and ameliorating spheres. There are three urgent tasks in the accomplishment of social redemption now confronting the Church. These are—the culture of the Christian conscience, the insistence upon the Christian standard of righteousness, and the development of the new character to achieve the new social order.

The creation and culture of the Christian conscience is a work of urgent necessity. There is still much of prejudice, bigotry and suspicion in the Churches. It is not always easy to be candid

in controversy and to give the other side credit for purity of motives. It is so much easier to make a point than to understand the other man's point of view. Yet one is never at liberty to wilfully misrepresent an opponent, much less a kinsman. Truth cannot be advanced by falsehood. As one reads the special pleading of the champions of the competing sects, it is difficult to repress a feeling of suspicion that they are lacking in candour, if not deliberately unfair in their statements of each other's views. No one condemns denominationalists, either Catholic or Protestant, State Church or Free Church, for using the strongest arguments they can find for the advance or defence of their position, but the Christian conscience has a right to demand that there shall be no doubt about the facts and the fairness of the statement.

The denominational conscience is not always sensitive. There may be representations of the facts of early Church history in which no single statement is false, yet the whole is so arranged as to be misleading and in effect entirely untrue. In the long run these methods of advocacy defeat their own purpose, and recoil in discredit upon those who use them. They do untold mischief, and are an outrage upon the Christian name. There can be no real union until we are honest and just to each other.

The culture of the Christian conscience would make it impossible for religious teachers to use terms which they know convey a meaning to the people that they do not accept themselves. There are many subtle excuses for this practice, but it destroys sincerity where sincerity is vital. If

we do not believe that we alone are the Church of God on earth, or in this land, why speak in a way that can leave no other impression on the minds of the congregation? Is it honourable to make capital out of the people's ignorance, or to find shelter in a misunderstanding?

There is only one religion, and, as Aquinas taught long ago, "we can attain by a holy life rather than subtlety of reasoning." God is no respecter of persons. He that doeth righteousness is righteous. There are many ways that lead to the one Way.

The Christian conscience is hungering for reality in religious teaching. It demands unquestionable veracity in the pulpit. It is heart-sick of make-believe. Thousands of intelligent young people are standing aloof from organised Christianity because it is not sufficiently Christian. Their feelings are voiced by Mr. St. John Adcock. He says:

"I grow tired of it all and disheartened. I look round on our Christian communities and feel more and more that we are humbugs in a world of humbugs, and yet am steadied at the worst by knowing at the back of my mind that God is no humbug, and cannot be hoodwinked. I am no longer of your Church or of any. The trivialities and insincerities of them all have driven me into the wilderness. But I am still of your faith. I do believe in the life everlasting. I believe that God lives and is a just God."

We must win back the people's faith in the sincerity of the Churches. It would be a great step in this direction if we could get rid of the belief that preachers do not quite mean what they say, that they may have some mental reservation which changes the entire value of their statements.

No true thought can ever keep one from fellowship with God or men. In the loud-sounding discussions the ear becomes deaf to the sad, sweet music of humanity. Our systems are not finally justified by logic, but by their value in enabling men to live the Christ life. It is true in religion as in science that in the crucible of life gold is often found in what seemed brass and clay, while many a highly-valued gem is consumed in the testing fire of experience.

It may be that exact definition is impossible in the sphere of the deepest truth. Yet men are not as mariners at sea without a compass under a starless sky, making for a port which is not marked upon their chart because it is still undiscovered. We know that goodness is good, that truth is better than falsehood, that happiness is in the path of duty rather than in the way of self-gratification, that the Christ-life is the highest and worthiest for men, that God is the rewarder of those who do right. These facts of experience are fundamental. The Christian conscience is very tolerant. It sees that speculation ought not to be a barrier, and that the best men may be mistaken in their judgments. It cannot use the old dogmatism about things that are not revealed. It substitutes the larger charity, that makes men at once humble and hopeful. It sees that ecclesiastical institutions are justified not by any schemes of logical or textual consistency, but by their fidelity to the spirit of their Master, who set the example of going about doing good. The simple test is the type of character they produce—"by their fruits ye shall know them." Lessing has a story worthy of remembrance. A rich

man who lived in an Eastern land had a precious ring. It contained a beautiful opal stone which radiated shades of blue and white and yellow and red. People believed it possessed a charm, and that whoever became its possessor would be beautiful in character and beloved by all. The owner of the ring gave it to his favourite son and told him that when he came to die he must pass it on to his son. In this way it remained in the family from generation to generation, until it belonged to an old man who had three sons; each was dear to his heart, and he was sorely troubled what to do. They could not all have it, and he could not bear the thought of bestowing it upon one to the exclusion of the others. At length he sought the services of a cunning workman, who made two other rings exactly like the original. The father, before his death, gave one to each of his boys with words of love. When he had passed away, one of the sons took out the ring and showed it to the others. To his amazement, each claimed to possess the original opal. There were the three rings and neither could tell which was the true one that possessed the charm. They sought a wise judge and begged him to solve the difficulty. Many questions were asked, and the precious stones in the rings were examined. Then the wise man gave his verdict :

" It is impossible to say," he declared, " which ring holds the charm. I cannot decide, but you can decide for yourselves."

" How ? " they exclaimed.

" Is it not known that the true ring brings grace and gentleness to the character of the one who wears it ? "

" Yes," they cried.

"Then," he continued, "I and all the people in the city will know which of you possesses the charm by the life you live. Go your ways and we shall see, for he who lives the best life will be the owner of the charm."

We may not by discussion ever agree which form of Church organisation is the best, but we can agree that it is the duty of all who name the name of Christ to live the life that expresses His Spirit and is in harmony with His will. There may be a wholesome rivalry in love and good works; whatever our denominational name we pray to the same God, speak the same language of faith, and hope to arrive at the same Father's house when we have passed through the valley of the shadow of death. May we not here and now join hands in holy service? The children of our common Father are in sore need of our help, and all that is best in us bids those who believe unite on behalf of those who suffer. May we not postpone the consideration of some of the questions which have divided us for generations, and which are to-day as impossible of satisfactory settlement as when they first blazed up in fierce controversy? Have we not spent time enough in seeking to solve that for which there is no solution given to man, while duty waits and conscience urges the claims of our neighbours?

It is impossible to possess Christ's spirit and not be concerned with the condition under which the people live. Our neighbour, the one we are to love as the proof of our love to God, is the man who is near at hand, not simply the heathen in Timbuctoo for whom we may work up enthusiasm, but the man living in the tenement house at the back of our own dwelling, working in the factory

owned by the company from which we derive our dividends. We must show our regard for him by dealing justly and putting our Christianity into our commercial relationships.

We have learnt that much of the awful burden which used to be borne in sullen resignation to some supposed Divine decree is not the result of an inscrutable Providence, but of conditions entirely preventable. A great mass of disease has its origin in causes resultant from poverty. Three centuries ago, Richard Hooker wrote :

> " Inasmuch as righteous life presupposeth life, inasmuch as to live virtuously is impossible except we live, therefore the first impediment which naturally we endeavour to remove is penury and want of things without which we cannot live."

It is a calamity that in the sectarian strife the Churches have forgotten the economic message of the Church. There must be the renewal of this proclamation of the incontestable right of all who toil to live by their labour. Conscience is often squeezed out of commerce until Capital ignores its moral obligation to pay a living wage, and Labour with equal readiness seeks to evade its duty to render honest service. The Christian conscience goes back to the authority of the giver of the Golden Rule, that great word, " Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them." Any standard less than that is unworthy of the Church and untrue to the Christ. The Christian conscience may dispense with metaphysics ; it is far more simple than many of us dream, but it is thorough-going. It accepts the spirit of Christ as its standard, and believes that the teaching of the Master is for practical living.

It is gathered up in the words of the Apostle, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." It grows sensitive of the gulf between the plain word of Jesus and the proclamation or the silence of His Church.

In seeking to answer the all-important question, What is Christianity? Harnack has rightly sought to recover its sociological message.

"The Gospel aims at founding a community among men as wide as human life itself and as deep as human need. As has been truly said, its object is to transform the socialism which rests on the basis of conflicting interests into the socialism which rests on the consciousness of a spiritual unity. In this sense its social message can never be outbid. In the course of the ages people's opinions as to what constitutes 'an existence worthy of a man' have, thank God, become much changed and improved. But Jesus, too, knew of this way of measuring things. Did He not once refer almost bitterly to His own position: 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head'? A dwelling, sufficient daily bread, cleanliness—all these needs He touched upon, and their satisfaction He held to be necessary, and a condition of earthly life. If a man cannot procure them for himself, others are to step in and do it for him. There can be no doubt, therefore, that if Jesus were with us to-day He would side with those who are making great efforts to relieve the hard lot of the poor and procure them better conditions of life. The fallacious principle of the free play of forces, of the 'live and let live' principle—a better name for it would be the 'live and let die'—is entirely opposed to the Gospel. And it is not as our servants, but as our brothers, that we are to help the poor."[1]

Wherever Christ is acknowledged as Leader there is a sensitised moral judgment in operation. He judges righteous judgment. There is a haunting uneasiness when the actions do not in some

[1] *What is Christianity*, p. 100.

way correspond to the ideal of the mind of the Master. "What would Jesus do?" is a question that will not be silenced by acceptance of what has been, and is now, as a justification of conduct. Fellowship with Christ makes a new type of conscience that is more powerful than the hope of personal gain or class advantage.

The growth of the Christian conscience is a disturbing element in the old commercialism. It feeds the social unrest. It cannot be at peace while it is true that ninety per cent. of the actual producers of wealth have no home they can call their own beyond one end of the week, have no bit of soil or so much as a room that belongs to them, have nothing of value of any kind except as much old furniture as will go in a cart, have the precarious chance of weekly wages which barely suffice to keep them in health, are housed for the most part in places that no man thinks fit for his horse, are separated by so narrow a margin from destitution that a month of bad trade, sickness or unexpected loss brings them face to face with hunger and pauperism. This was the normal condition of the average workman twenty years ago, as described by so unemotional an observer as Mr. Frederic Harrison. In the main it is still true in every detail. The study of Economics and Sociology have made the social problem the question of the hour. It is no longer possible for the average intelligent Christian to shelter himself in ignorance. The information is tabulated, checked and verified by unquestionable non-partisan authorities. It is printed in Blue Books, official documents, trade returns, magazine articles, and in the daily press. It is

shouted by Socialists at the street corners and spoken from public platforms. It is discussed at religious conferences and Trade Unions. It is voiced from many pulpits and in the House of Commons.

As soon as any question of social betterment is raised, some vested interest is touched. There is no form of vice or social oppression which does not put money in somebody's pocket. Governments may be willing and anxious to curtail the drink traffic and protect the victims, and find themselves powerless because the money invested is stronger than the collective conscience. The strongest Government dare not legislate very far in advance of public opinion. The Churches can create the necessary dynamic, they possess the spiritual power that awakens the sense of responsibility, generates sympathy, and provides the spirit of self-sacrifice.

Let the politicians make their programmes and seek the suffrages of the electors, while the Churches teach men to put conscience into their civic duties. Their mission is not to meddle with economic theories which demand expert knowledge, but to create and enforce that higher conscience without which the truest economics will fail. There will always be those ardent souls who seek to commit the Churches to the party, whatever its name, that for the moment is enthusiastic for social reform. They are rightly impatient to get things done, but they have to learn that Christianity is of no party in order that it may permeate all parties. It is easy to gain a brief popularity by advocating the demands of the workers, and usually the demands are justifiable. But these

are matters not within the province of the Church to determine. Nothing is mended by meddling. The position of the Church with its duties to Labour and Capital enable her to insist upon the stewardship of wealth, which conscience demands, and also upon the stewardship of labour to render honest service. Embracing all classes, the Church may be a bridge over the gulf that divides class from class. Wherever the Christian conscience asserts itself in the individual, it becomes a factor for the healing of the nations.

During many generations, the Churches, in spite of their terrible departures from the teaching of their Master, and the family feuds which have disgraced their history, have been the corporate conscience of the communities among which they have lived. In common fairness it must be recognised that they had to work and express their teaching through people who were only partially Christianised. They themselves would not claim to be entirely Christian. It is profoundly true that religious ideas have the fate of the melodies, which, once set afloat in the world, are taken up by all sorts of instruments, some of them woefully coarse, feeble, or out of tune, until people are in danger of crying out that the melody itself is detestable. Now Christianity is widely diffused, its morality is generally approved, at least in words if not in deeds. Outside the Churches a great body of unorganised religion is manifest, so that in matters of conduct it is extremely difficult to distinguish professing Christians from the man of the world who makes no claim to any religion. It remains with the Christian leaders to see to it that the Churches do not cease to be the

moral conscience in the State. There is no greater need than a revival of conscience. On its girdle hangs the key that will open the gates of the new Garden of Eden for the weary sons of toil and the pleasure-loving rich, who in the pursuit of desire have forgotten their duty.

The Church needs a truer sense of the relative value of her work. It is undoubtedly her duty to care for the slum children, but it is even more incumbent to insist upon the provision of decent homes for the people. It is her function to seek the poor Magdalens, who fall into the sisterhood of shame that nightly walks the streets of our great cities. It is not less her duty to insist upon a standard of rightness that will enforce the payment of wages which will deliver girls from the terrible temptation of ekeing out a living by selling their bodies. The enlightened Church will not use Bibles and hymn-books produced by sweated labour. Temperance Societies will go on seeking to reclaim the drunkard, but there will also be a real attempt to provide counter-attractions to the gin palace.

These works cannot be effectively carried forward except by united action. Sectional efforts do not meet the need ; indeed, they hardly touch the fringe of any one of the problems presented by the changed condition of society. The Church is more than the moral scavenger or than the ambulance brigade. Her work is to prevent evil quite as much as to reclaim from evil. To rouse the people from the callous apathy they display in matters of civic duty, the Church must continually stand forth as the preacher of social rightness.

The Church by her Master's commission is on the

side of all who plead for a just social order, in which the moral life can breathe freely and develop to the full stature of manhood in Christ Jesus. There is a religious ideal of national righteousness that is alluring and worth personal sacrifice to attain. To have given the smallest impulse towards its realisations would have been something worth living for and in itself a great reward. The sectarian divisions create the lamentable spectacle of Churches being actively engaged on both sides of almost all public controversies affecting social betterment. Their action is often determined by local influences and personal prejudices. Vested interests compel them to be silent, or to give support to the forces that are reactionary. The men who hold the purse of the religious community are often directly concerned and personally benefited by the prosperity of trades that demoralise the people. The zeal that should have gone into the crusade for rightness has too often been dissipated in denominational controversy over matters upon which Christian people might reasonably have been expected to agree to differ. Heat and passion which would only have been justified in things of vital concern have been wasted over the infinitely little. The world has listened to the loud raging advocacy with wonder that has developed into something like contempt when it discovers the cause of the conflict. It hardly troubles now to take note of more than the eccentricities of the pulpit and the vacancies in the pew.

The Prophets and Apostles were insistent in proclaiming righteousness. The ethical laws are always supreme in their teaching. They insist

upon right-doing. Faith without works is dead. If it is urged that their message is to the individual, it must not be forgotten that the community is the multiple individual, a corporation of wills. The State is not something apart from the person, but the whole personality, of which each is a part, and through each the whole is perfected. Goethe says that only mankind together is the true man, and the individual can only be joyous and happy when he feels himself in the whole. The cause of Christ has suffered terribly by the mutilation of His teaching. The strong ethical note has been almost lost in the endless discussions of the Churches concerning non-essential things, but there is an ethical catholicity becoming apparent in modern preaching. It is a sign of the brighter day which is dawning. The true Church is needed to exalt the Christ-life and to proclaim the righteousness that exalteth a nation. The sects are individualistic and local. They lack the unity of the Spirit, and speak without authority. The whole Christian consciousness must utter its message as with one voice. It is admitted that the teachers of ethics who are outside the Churches are just as divided. There are as many schools of purely ethical thought as there are schools of theology, and the representatives of these ethical sects understand each other no better, and love each other no more. But they have far greater excuse for their divisions. They are seeking moral sanctions and endeavouring to create a standard of authority by a consensus of opinion. The Churches have their sanctions and authority in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not explorers mapping out a new country. The

righteousness revealed by the Lord Christ is still so far above anything that has been attained that it is acclaimed by His friends and critics alike as the ideally perfect way of life. All that is in accord with the Master's lofty standard is in harmony with and promotes human progress, and is in accord with the ultimate fitness of things. To exalt Christ in the fulness of His Gospel is to meet the world's need of a Saviour from that selfishness which is the tap-root of our individual and collective sins.

The Church is peculiarly fitted to be the teacher and guardian of rightness. Whatever else it may share with secular organisations, in this it is absolutely pre-eminent. There are two temptations which are common to our own time. One is that the individual may be so over-awed by the sense of his personal insignificance that he may regard his life as worthless in its results to the community, and may drift into callousness and apathy. Feeling that he can do so little, he may do nothing. The other, the real danger of democratic societies, that he may be so immersed in material pursuits as to practically ignore the claims of others, and become a law unto himself. The Church proclaims the sacredness of the human unit, and his value to God. It sets a high calling before a man in claiming his life as a means through which God will benefit others. It offers fellowship for all who are seeking a better order, comradeship with the unseen Christ and life beyond the grave. These considerations, whatever their speculative difficulties, have made existence in this life not only endurable under adverse conditions, but glorious in its rich possibilities of human usefulness and blessedness.

Christian Union in Social Service

An ethical revival demands a deeper and purer spirituality than is manifested by sectarianism with its limited sympathies and rival systems. They must give place to the Christ-consciousness which has already drawn men closer together in recognition of the kinship of all who believe in God and a growing desire to make life sweeter and of more value for all the children of men. The Church, broken like the body of her Master as a sacrifice for souls, is surely coming forth in resurrection unity, to manifest the almighty power of the Divine through human instrumentality. It is not enough to endeavour to repress evil. The positive good must be set forth. The laws of the Kingdom must be proclaimed. We live in the world as it is, not in the world as God intends it to be. We are here to set forth the Divine will in all human goodness. Sir Oliver Lodge rightly says :

> " Either corporate action towards amelioration is impossible, or the Church in the most comprehensive sense should be the most powerful army for good in existence. It is manifest that in all Christian communities there are strong forces co-operating to bring about a return to the early spirit of fellowship. There is increased impatience with any insistence upon non-fundamental things, and a growing feeling that if men cannot agree in right opinions, they can join hands in promoting good works."

Many independent thinkers, outside the Churches, have come to Mr. Wells's view, that the true Church will be the conscious illuminated expression of catholic brotherhood, and therefore regard the reformation or reconstruction of the Catholic Church as a necessary work of vital importance. The fragments of Christendom with their little

jealousies and rivalries cannot in any adequate sense be the example and expositor of moral rightness for the world. All who are longing to see the Church occupy the position among men which she holds in the mind of her Divine Creator may hasten the day by accepting Christ's rightness as their own ideal and using the opportunities that offer of entering into co-operative efforts for social well-being with all those who own allegiance to the one Lord and Master of us all.

The present social order is not the final goal of economic evolution. No advocate of the satisfied-with-things-as-they-are type can shut his eyes to the broad facts of social progress. England has made enormous advance during the last fifty years. Whatever may be said by extremists, life is fuller and richer for all classes of the community than ever before. In no period of the world's history was life so much worth living as in the present time. We may be very far from the millennium, but man has found the way and is well on the road. Each advance opens up new vistas of possibility and creates fresh problems. The progress in the past provides a firm foundation for faith in progress in the future. Social developments create a new type of mind with new consciousness of its own power and new needs to be supplied. Progress looks not to a definite place upon a map on which "Ne Plus Ultra" is written, but to an open road with a sign bearing the one word "Forward."

The question for the Churches is whether they are to have any share in leading men along from the wilderness to the promised land. Will they retain any leadership or become camp followers?

Will the New Democracy, tired of the sectarian struggles that occupy the thought and consume so much of the energy of the Churches, leave them alone to settle their dissensions while they go forward with other guides? The religious communities have already largely determined the answer, and may finally settle it during the next few years. Admittedly there are long arrears to be made up, ancient feuds to be forgotten, and old jealousies to be wiped out; but there are signs of a genuine concern for the life of the people, and an awakened conscience which indicates the work of the Divine Spirit, and are laden with rich promise for the days to come. The united Church must demonstrate by its labours that it has a real contribution to make towards the great State to which men of all creeds are turning wistful eyes, that it offers not cheap criticisms but constructive leadership.

Bishop Westcott rightly said that "more is at stake in the efforts of our combined labour than we are inclined to suppose. The conquest of doubt will come through the conquest of life." The new social order demands a new type of man. The old motives of personal gain must give place to motives of collective enrichment. The ambition to get on must be lost in the nobler ideal to help on. Instead of competition there must be co-operation. Private advancement is to have as its substitute the desire to render public service. In the coming time the individual will realise collective responsibility and will bear his part of the obligation of contributing of his strength to the support of the weak.

The Democracy is learning to use its own

powers. The new consciousness of strength is fraught with peril. It may lead to a passing phase of tyranny worse than the old despotism. Men smarting from the sense of ancient wrongs may not show much regard for the privileges of others, especially if they believe that these represent their old oppressors. They can hardly be expected to view with affectionate tenderness institutions which have hindered their progress toward economic freedom.

If the Great State is to be better and more enduring than the present, it is not likely to be the outcome of class hatred. The latest social gospel frankly puts all considerations of altruism and humanitarian ideals aside, and makes a plain brutal appeal to class hatred in order to precipitate the overthrow of Capital and the present condition of things, in the hope of building upon the chaos of the present, principles of universal brotherhood and a just economic State. It is difficult to conceive any advocacy more mistaken in its motives or more pernicious in its methods. Yet it has able leaders and many disciples. If it were possible to set class against class, so that there would be economic war to a finish, surely it would be impossible to draw its representatives together in the bonds of brotherhood after the final battle. It is not an appeal to force that will result in brotherhood, for brotherhood is a matter of spirit and goodwill. Men cannot be whipped into it. As Mill says, " Except on matters of mere detail, there are perhaps no practical questions even among those which approach nearest to the character of pure economic questions which admit of being decided on economic principles alone."

Is the new social order to produce the new type of man? That seems to be the opinion of many. It is not a matter of speculation, it can be determined by an appeal to history. What have been the results of the experiments in socialistic and communistic colonies? In the United States, many such experiments have been made. In England there have been a few. Robert Owen spent his life in fashioning a co-operative colony in which money was abolished, and each one did some service for the community. He built a great hall and in gold letters over the entrance there were the mystic letters "C. of M." Visitors were told that they meant "Commencement of the Millennium," and Owen, in the goodness of his heart, believed that thus the Millennium would come, and that the new environment would change the colonists and they would be of a higher and nobler type of character. The attempt failed, and its promoter lost his money. How is it that no attempt to realise socialistic ideals in co-operative colonies has held together for five-and-twenty years? Is it because of the ingrained selfishness of our common humanity and the desire for personal aggrandisement? The average man does not care to take any part in experiments in colonisation on these principles, and the exceptional man who by his enthusiasm is drawn into communistic ventures, usually retires a poorer and a sadder man. It is not because of the principle, the failure is in the men themselves.

If it were possible to set up the new social order at once through Parliamentary enactments or by revolution, it would be foredoomed to failure

unless there was the new type of man to carry it out. The regeneration of society depends upon the regeneration of the individual. The acceptance of the teaching of Jesus has prompted men to attempt the achievement of a higher social order. In the Apostolic days, when the disciples sold their possessions and had all things in common, in the early communal life of the monasteries and the great religious orders, in the social settlements, educational, ameliorative and charitable activities, the Churches have recognised the obligation and have tried, though often unwisely, yet sincerely, to lift the burdens of the weak and oppressed.

The Church cannot be true to her mission without contributing to the movements for social betterment. The saved man is a step towards the redemption of society. Progress is slow, because the Churches, forgetting their high calling, turn aside to seek other ends. There is no spectacle more tragic than the Christian communities spending their strength in struggles to maintain their small privileges and rival interests. Their task is the salvation of men, and for this, the greatest of all works, their ministry is supremely endowed. The Christian contribution to the Great State is the creation of a new type of character. Wherever the Churches fail in this glorious enterprise, they cease to be the representative of Jesus Christ. Failure here is fatal. Their institutions may for a long time be galvanised into some semblance of vitality, but the soul of religion will have departed, leaving the houses of worship beautiful memorials of a noble, but dead past. The free Spirit of God will find other channels of communication and different modes of

manifestation. The work of redemption will go forward, but ecclesiastical institutions, like the Jewish people of olden time, will have lost their opportunity and missed their objective.

The Great State will arrive through many agencies. There are numerous streams contributing to the broad river, and all the rivers find their way to the sea. Education, home influence, physical development, land reform, a re-modelled poor-law, and a thousand others will give their aid to the new order. It will evolve as the character of the people develops. The new City of God will be built as soon as men are prepared to dwell therein, but not till then. It is the redeemed man who sees the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. The Church has the great task of making the new man.

The greatest contribution any man can make to the new social state is the contribution of a saved character, of an intelligence clear from misconception and false ideals, of a will which enthrones righteousness in the place of expediency. Such a man will himself manifest the indwelling Christ and set in operation the deepest principles of justice and right.

The Democracy rightly demands that the Church shall be judged by deeds, not words, by her practice, not her phrase-making, that she shall do the Christ's work or stand aside. It is clear that the Christian ideal is maimed and retarded by the sectarian divisions, competitions, mutual jealousies and suspicions. These have doubtless contributed to make strong denominationalists, but they have spoiled a great many Christians.

Will the Churches rise to the occasion? The time has passed for living comfortably upon brilliant traditions and pious ancestors. All the voices are calling to the Church, "Put on thy strength, O daughter of Zion. Shake thyself from the dust." The close of a dispensation is near at hand, a new light is in the sky. Is it only another signal of storm, or is it the sign of the dawn of the day of the Son of Man? If He should come, would His servants go out together to meet Him, or would He find them still discussing their endless differences? All the ties that unite Christians in holy fellowship to the Lord whose name they bear, all the needs of the people to whom by the ties of blood they belong, all the teaching of the faithful men who have kindled the sense of brotherhood in human hearts, call to the Churches to join their forces, closing their ranks for the united defence of righteousness and for attack upon all that makes life a degradation and a burden. Only by responding to that call of opportunity can the Churches save themselves and the world. This is their day of grace, their crisis, their glorious chance. As far as they answer by uniting all who believe in the service of all who suffer, they will be following the vision and returning to their vocation and Christ will come to the world through them.

The ultimate test of the Church is union. "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." And we may know that we have not fathomed the present purpose of God nor found our true centre until our light brings us into a practical oneness with all who are in Christ. Churches are separate lights, each with their own distinctive radiance, but only

as they merge in one common flame, giving their strength to the completeness of the blended blaze, can they become a beacon light to guide the mariners far out on life's storm-tossed sea. "These, my children," said St. Columba, "are my last words. I charge you to keep unfeigned love one with another. . . . And God, the champion of the good, will help you."

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